Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2018 with funding from
Duke University Libraries

https://archive.org/details/archive1999durh

the archive

fall 1999
volume 112
number one

the archive

fall issue
nineteen hundred ninety-nine
volume one hundred twelve, number one

Staff

Editor: Courtney Queeney

Sarah Barden
Jennifer Bedell
Jennie Berkesch
Alexis Blane
Kathy Crutcher
Hilary Forester
Alison Haddock
Allen Loeb
Andrea Mazzarino
Kate McCutcheon
Kelly Lynn Mulvey
Bess Newman
Andrew Nurkin
Gina Rebollar
Lisa Rying
Jessica Snow

Special Thanks

Beverly Meek
Moli Jones and the Publishing Place
Prateeti Khazani

The Archive is published by Undergraduate Publications at Duke University, North Carolina. The editorial staff will not consider work that has been submitted concurrently to another campus publication. Authorial anonymity is oreserved throughout the review process. Correspondence should be directed to Undergraduate Publications at 101-3 Bryan Center, Duke University, Durham, NC 27708.

4443

Archives
378.756
T833Q
v.112 1999

Editor's Note

Notes from the editor appeared regularly in past volumes of the *Archive,* and were often used as a forum to address social, political, and artistic issues present both at Duke and within our country as a whole. *Confessions of a White Liberal*, appearing on page twenty-seven, is an example the *Archive* staff chose to include in this semester's edition for a number of reasons. This essay, like all other past works re-published here, is not intended to be read as either the opinion of the *Archive* staff or even an example of the 'best' prose that we discovered in old issues. The idea of selecting the 'best' old poetry and prose is an impossible one; not only do I not think that an absolute hierarchy of artistic works can be determined based on some quantitative assessment of their worth, but if it were possible I could not claim the authority to do this myself. The pieces we chose to include were instead ones that stretched the limits of the patterns we have been taught to follow at this University. In an eighty-page volume, most of which is dedicated to new writing and works of art, the limitations of space are obvious. I hope that the small selection of older pieces that we did manage to include accomplish the goal of our original concept of a double issue: that they give some idea of what students were concerned about in 1970, how they viewed the future in 1955, and what structures they were trying to undermine seven years ago.

Courtney Queeney, Editor
the Archive Staff

Table of Contents

Poetry and Prose

Lotus *Lisa Rying* 7
Reflection *Edward Post* . . .Februrary 1938 8
Making Tortillas *Andrea Mazzarino* 9
Janie *Guy Davenport* . . .January 1949 10
Dreaming Delicate Still *Terry Schuster.* 11
Of the Future, Often Confused With Science Fiction *George Keithley* . . .December 1955 12
Some Questions *Jim Applewhite* . . .February 1958 13
Renting *Fred Chappell* . . .April 1965 14
Thoughts on an Abandoned Cabin in Southern Utah *Laura Podolsky* 15
13 Ways of Looking at a Peach *Kathryn Van Wert.* 16
Shrimp *Michael Gause* 17
Goya's Etchings of War *Wally Kaufman* . . .March 1959 22
I Read *Lorna Blane* . . .March 1959 23
Moja Droga, Ja Cie Kocham: An Endearment *Lisa Rying* 24
Lullaby to a Monster *Herman Salinger* . . .February 1966 26
Confessions of a White Liberal *Sherry Sitton* . . .April 1964 27
Polish Poem #1 *H. P. Morgan* . . .April 1968 28
Till Death Do You Part *Lisa Rying* 30
To Possession of Black Beauty *H.W. Hutchinson III* . . .April 1968 31
6 Billion Proud *Lee Bullock* 32
Teeth *A. M. Gluvna* 34
Beyond the Nursery *Kathryn Van Wert* 38
Poor Noodles, Rich Noodles *Lee Bullock* 39
The Miracle Worker *George Wood* . . .Fall 1970 40
here I am dying *Jennie Berkesch* 40
conversation with my mother *Courtney Queeney* 42
all in one breath *Laura Podolsky* 43
A Strange Affair *Mara Jebsen* 44
The Ways of Women *David Giber* . . .Fall 1979. 46
Meatloaf *Matt Morriss* 48
The Assassination *Barry George* . . .Spring 1980 50
Reading, Reagan, and Religion *Christopher Foster* . . .Spring 1989 50
My Piano Teacher's Wife at His Funeral *Terry Schuster* 51
Lifelines: Kukes, Albania *Alexis Blane* 52

The Gravity Wise *Amy Vyas* 54
Ten Things Which Will Try to Say Who I Am *Josh Robertson* . . . Spring 1995. 58
Appendix 1: 8-Shot Manifesto! *High Plains Drifter* . . .Fall 1993 59
Hustled *Alison Niebanck* 62
'Blues go...but become home before long' *Daniel A. Thomas as Phoenix Balanque*. 63
To be An Effective Agent you must *Josh May* . . .Fall 1992 64
Personal Statement: A Manifesto *Josh May* . . .Spring 1996 65
If That Reddest Hour You in Your Sleep and Me in Mine *Leila Easa* . . .Fall 1995 66
Baby Born Outside Macedonia *Lisa Rying* 69
Offer *Jerry A. Dowless* . . . Fall 1995. 70
Lemons *James Sander* . . .Spring 1996 71
Model 1 *n. Courtney Queeney* 72
Ritual *Laura Podolsky* 75
St/æ/uff: Disacknowledgements *The Catachreses* 76
Endkindling: *Entartete Kunst Alexis Blane* 78

Artwork and Photography

Walking into the Light *Jason Nichols* 1
Clutter *Lily-Hayes Kaufman* 6
What's Left in Buffalo's Grain Mills? *Jason Nichols*. 8
Shoes: Wake Forest, North Carolina *Jason Wagner* 10
On the Connection of Household Devices *Pitchaya Sudbanthad* . . .Spring 1997. 13
Portrait in Red *Suzanne Kurtzer* 17
Caloniot *Suzanne Kurtzer* 24
Untitled *Ellen Brenner* . . .Fall 1997 26
Druize Village, Israel *Suzanne Kurtzer* 29
Hiding *Jessica Snow* 30
Street Vendor, Bethlehem *Suzanne Kurtzer*. 32
Exposed *Jacky Myint* 41
Last Exit *Jason Nichols* 47
Supermodel Interior *Pitchaya Sudbanthad*. . .Spring 1997. 49
The Grace of Barefoot Weather *Kate McCutcheon* 51
Nature's Mirror *Jason Nichols* 57
Infinite Objective Truth *Lily-Hayes Kaufman*. 61
This is Not a Street *Heather Seybolt* . . .Spring 1997 68
Portrait *Gwendolyn Kerschbaumer* . . . Spring 1998. 73
Outside the Structure *Lily-Hayes Kaufman* 74
Apoptosis *Andrew Snow* . . .Spring 1999. 80

Cover Art

Untitled *Ellen Brenner* . . .Fall 1997

Navagio *Eleni Boussios* . . .Fall 1998

The Next Generation: Santiago, Atitlan, Guatemala *Jacob Harold* . . .Spring 1999

Waiting for the Dalai Lama, Dharamsala, India *Jacob Harold* . . .Spring 1999

Yellow Springs, OH *Suzanne Kurtzer.* . .Fall 1997

Dragon *Nitsirk* . . .Spring 1999

Martin, Hemingway, SC *Paula Posas* . . .Fall 1997

Untitled *Carolyn Siefken* . . .Spring 1997

Influenza *Andrew Snow* . . .Spring 1999

Clutter

Lily-Hayes Kaufman

Lotus

Om mani padme hum

It is hard to teach my body to bend
as she has never known, with knees
and hips pushed to achieve exaltation
in foreign angles, in ways of attaining
spiritually so unfamiliar to me
that they are like gods who receive
their worship in tongues.
As a child, I wanted to learn
how to divide my limbs like strips
of dough—to stand in dancer's tights
as a stork stands still and erect,
ignoring the flooding water below
that obscures the feet's connection
to the rippling earth.
I wanted my mother to say
-yes, of course you can-
as I pointed to the girls
in the mirrored studio, lined
and crinolined as if waiting
for high school boys to come
and pick them out of the line.
I saw them watching themselves
get the head start on being pliable
women, with moms encouraging them
forward, their palms pushing outward,
slightly raised as if in communion,
as if waiting for the body of Christ
to land between their hands for worship,
just as I wait now with my hips
open and stiff, extending so far
to see the existence of God.

Lisa Rying

Reflection

Happy is he and he alone who writes
His full biography within this line:
I once was born. I wed. I worked. I died.—
Or he who is too mad to know himself
So well. I would forget the tedious chain
Of dreams and chromosomes that are my self.
I'd have my pride in such a shattered heap
That I should crawl in rags to beg from babes
The wisdom of their ignorance. And yet,
The very self I would deny, denies
Its own desires. I would be all-consumed
And made a real and humble slave by love
Of Her—but She must have a pretty face.

Edward Post
February 1938

What's Left in Buffalo's Grain Mills?

Jason Nichols

Making Tortillas

Leather hands
embrace a stone, pressing corn to grain.
A woman works, alive to the rhythm
of a snapping fire.
She stands barefoot on the earth,
soaking in the morning.

In the silence of morning,
in forty-nine years on the pulsing earth,
she has become the Alchemist; her hands
with their daily rhythm
can alter a ball of broken grain
with water, stone, and fire.

The sweat on her forehead catches light—beads of fire,
like those her daughters' hands
smoothed away, when stretched on the earth,
she led her first son to the morning.
Her breath kept the fluid rhythm,
that her hands do now, as they knead the grain.

Six *niños* she raised on this grain—
summoned them through the haze of morning
to wash in a river, who in its strong rhythm
shined them like stones the hue of earth.
At last, their wet bodies blushed by the fire,
they saw the warm, gold pile and opened their hands.

A woman's laboring hands
speak of many a morning:
Burying seed in the earth,
Feeding to life a hearth fire,
Nursing her fevered son with hot milk and grain,
Praying as his rising chest dropped its rhythm.

Today brings only the common rhythm
of a harvest morning.
Her hands
moisten the dried grain
and meld the dough flat, still smelling of earth.
Then, soft orbs on the stove gather light—pools of yellow fire.

She holds power this morning
in her warm hands—
the sum of years' work within a bright circle shed by fire.

Andrea Mazzarino

Janie

janie was a nigger, lawd
who loved her dice and gin
janie was a nigger, lawd
who loved her dice and gin
she uz a leanbacked woman
til de ha'd life stove her in

janie played her music, lawd
from legere st to quinn
janie played her music, lawd
from legere st to quinn
she uz a mean jazztime mama
til de ha'd life stove her in

janie was a lover, lawd
bot' sanctioned and in sin
janie was a lover, lawd
bot' sanctioned and in sin
she musta loved a honnert men
till de ha'd life stove her in
but janie was a gambler, lawd
what knowed she couldnt win

but janie was a gambler, lawd
what knowed she couldnt win
she played de ha'd life mighty close
until it stove her in

Guy Davenport
January 1949

Shoes: Wake Forest, North Carolina

Jason Wagner

Dreaming Delicate Still

Don't wake up pretty girl
I don't want to share you
with the childish world.

I've been waiting in the cotton water
where you dream
where bare velvet arms tread.
Don't fall to daylight
until I kiss your perfect palms
dry and velvet soft.
Don't wake up pretty girl.

The groove of your hip dancing still
poor
poor and perfect.
I'll measure my pace
in your smiles, pretty girl
the dance of your lips pale
and perfect.
Oh deserting night, shed some dark
on these deceptive windows.
Rain gray twilight just one more hour.
You are not yet behind me.

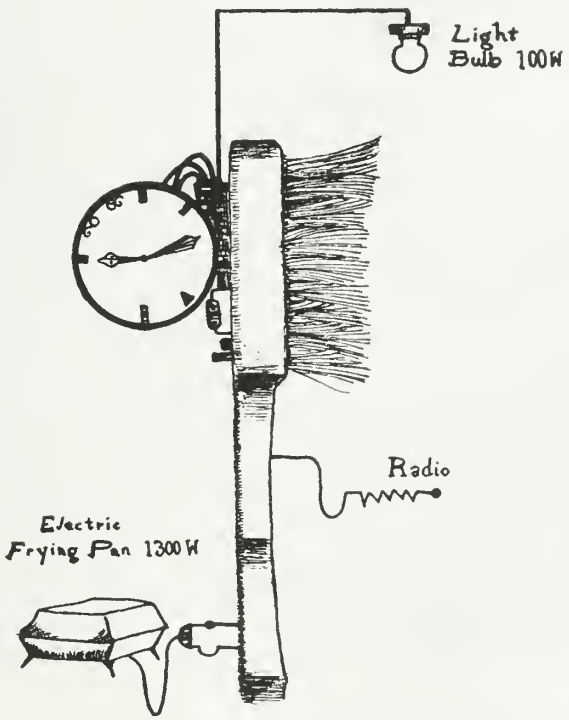
Stir in your cotton waters girl
spilling blue yawns
in morning faces.
I'll break my song
and sink behind tendril eyelids
pretending to be asleep.
Push away the childish world
and stare, pretty girl.
A bedraggled boy dreaming delicate still.

Terry Schuster

Of the Future, Often Confused With Science Fiction

So often you've heard of the cold, grey sea
and the waves that lap at long piers,
but the tale I tell of the Sea of Hell
shall fall on foreign ears.

The Sea rose high that year and devoured
numerous coastal cities, scoured
their streets and burned their buildings like dishes
at the bottom of a soapy-watered pan,
while in the centers of the continents
cowered
man.
The Sea roared on.
Suddenly afraid of his surroundings,
the pounding sea threatening to rise higher
around his land, he planned escape from his
sphere of clay, water, and gravel.
One fellow even wrote a book: *On the Possibilities of Interplanetary Travel,*
a real smeller.
Skeptics immediately countered with,
After Everything Goes Up Let's Just Move Sideways a Little, a best-seller.
People hesitated, faced with the thought
of leaving, and possibly all for naught,
their world of one-flick lighters by Ronson,
and junior senators from Wisconsin.
However, in what seemed like very soon,
men volunteered to fly to the moon
where they found they could eat all one would please
of a food here only described as green cheese
Then having no more candles to burn,
tired of the many wonders they'd seen,
they hopped the local to quickly return
to write for a bi-weekly magazine
an expose of revelations they'd learned



On the Connection of Household Devices

Pitchaya Sudbanthad
Spring 1997

about inventions using nuclear fission,
while others, tho nonetheless concerned,
watched the trip on television.
The Sea roared on.
The fearfilled people, plagued with fright,
sought the steeple every nite.
The Sunday choirs no longer sang,
but hellfire and damnation rang
from the baking, rockpile churchroof spires
over pulpits forced to quake and sway
as preachers roared and had their day,
then perished, every one, in forest fires.
The Sea roared on.
The world ended neither with whimper nor bang
nor simper on the face of orangutang,
but instead with thoughtful contemplation,
a period of quiet meditation,
several moments of silent grief,
and, in some places, a sigh of relief.
But mostly it ended in the only way
that it could, with another day,
the sloshing of waves under piers of wood,
a draft slamming meaningless doors
to startle starving cats whose feet
scratched across hollowhouse floors,
while a wind wisped out from the dawns,
scattered dry leaves over unowned lawns,
and rolled cigarette butts down an empty street.
So often you've heard of the cold, grey sea
settling slowly back into the deep,
and the tale I tell of the Sea of Hell
is one of an after dinner sleep.
For the waves that had caused so much fear
receded and left the sands quite clear
and clean, then basked in the sun, serene,
like a man pushing his chair back from the dinnertable
and waiting for no one to call,
as if nothing important had happened,
nothing, nothing at all.

George Keithley
December 1955

Some Questions

Jim Applewhite
February 1958

When in winter the trees
Wind their skeletons
Into the cold sky
What do they supplicate?
And in the evenings,
What is the look of sunlight
On the wood of branches?
What patterns, what color,
Cast on stones and clay?
Does the brown sparrow
Catch the slow light
In the hollow of its wing?

Renting

Fred Chappell
April 1965

This one apartment is furnished with shadows,
In the last I was all the furniture,
Of before I have no memory.

The road, however, the road goes throbbing by,
The fences are wilting down. Surely
The land must mean something by all this heat.

Meanwhile, waiting carves improbable shapes
Upon the air; them I will not admit.
I will be hard, real, mute, alert.

The room is cocked and loaded
Like the eyes of a whore. Too much
It has been bought and sold, sold out.

The sun is bleary, too drunk
To talk. The brink of actual
Being once more seems crumbling.

Thoughts on an Abandoned Cabin in Southern Utah

Likely as not there is a baby buried here—
a frail thing who wailed too briefly to be named;
or who, seeing the desperate tight faces
and the silent dry hills,
was loathe to take the name they gave her.

She must have seen
through the hanging paper window
the rejection that stood implacable,
rejection just waiting to happen
if she tried to love the red-hard cliffs
and wind-fickle sand,
a land so adamantly not-womb
that all its creatures hid from it.
Or if not through the window,
surely she saw its reflection
in the hunger-bright eyes
of her parents, sun-broke and
craving the hope of her, yet also
guilty at the lonely desert life
to which they brought her.

Perhaps hers was the abandonment
that prompted theirs,
her thin whimper a last protest
against the land which refused embrace.
In her small short breaths were announced
the winds which ate away the caulking,
that pushed the cabin to one side,
that finally moaned low through an emptied dream.

Laura Podolsky

13 Ways of Looking at a Peach

1.
There was salt in your kiss,
A poem goes,
Yours was salt-sweet like an Ocean-Peach
fresh off the beach.

2.
My baby will be a peach
Spoiled sweet
And fuzz like gilded glass--
Sky-residue, shining tranquil

3.
Everything was peachy--
I was keen on him
And he was keen back at me
Or kind of,
Until he told me he was fruity.

4.
Her skin was perfectly peach,
Grown gentle
And washed wild with summer.

5.
Our cellar was full of peach-liquor
Our Sunday full of Easter
Our mother was the Bearer.

6.
Every sunset spills
A peach-lament all over me

7.
He is marrying a peach named Rose
Whose crimson cardigan (from the Gap)
Is really much more salmon than
Burgundy
Should be

8.
I wondered,
While in a once,
Whether those people
Freezing in the Andes
Pretended it was peach.

9.
(Peaches,
Being purely flesh,
Must be the anti-vegetarian fruit)

10.
Our hands clung clammy
While we sunk our mulberry-stained heels
Deep into spongy new peach-ground

11.
When I think of peaches
I see my Baba,
Who lost her grownup teeth
And who died before I had a chance
To love her.

12.
And I am sure that my heart is a peach
When it bruises pulpy
Red-raw,
Staining my entire body
The color Fragile

13.
Lying dazed in sweet and sour lemon-grass
Behind my house last July,
I matured into a dandelion
And waxed bitter around the
Peach-pitted knot in my stomach.

Kathryn Van Wert

Portrait in Red

Suzanne Kurtzer

Shrimp

Before we leave for the beach, Evelyn and I stop at the hospital to see our thirty-three year old daughter Theresa. Evelyn's been going every day since she was put back in here four days ago. This is my first trip.

"She wants to see you, Carlyle. She feels awful about what happened. You know that she didn't mean it."

She's holding onto my arm tightly, dabbing occasionally at her eyes with a tissue. She cries all the time these days. Says that she's losing her only daughter.

"I know, Evelyn, I know. She's still my daughter. That will never change."

"Just don't bring it up, Carlyle. She didn't know what she was doing."

We open the door to the psychological ward. I have only been into these kinds of places twice. The first time was when my older brother A.J. flipped out and went after his wife with a bat.

The other time was back when Theresa was in high school and we were all still living down at the beach. When I was having my problems with the bottle.

Theresa is here because she tried to slam the hood of her car down on top of my head. I was trying to disconnect the battery after one of her spells where she started throwing things and hitting my wife. She said she was going for good.

I was lucky, the cops said. Lucky I got my hands back up.

We walk in, Evelyn still holding my arm, directing me to the room. We talk briefly to a doctor named Jones before going in. He calls her condition "fair."

"What does that mean?" I ask. "I mean on a scale of bad to great?"

"Just fair," he says. "Much better than when we let her in."

"See," Evelyn says. "She's doing better every day."

"You know we're taking a trip to the beach tonight, right?"

"Yes," he says. "Your wife told me. I think that's the best idea for both of you."

"We haven't had a quiet dinner alone in nearly a year, since she moved back in with us," I tell him.

He nods and checks something on his clipboard. "That was when she had the episode at the grocery store?"

"Yes."

We open the door to her room. Her back is to me when I walk inside. She's standing at the foot of her bed, watching something on the television.

It reminds me of when she was little, when she would stay up late after I told her to go to bed. She would creep back into the living room and stand in her nightgown, watching television. Sometimes we wouldn't find her until the morning, asleep on the couch.

"Theresa," Evelyn says. I stay a little behind her, my hat in my hands.

She turns, slowly, like someone is behind her pushing carefully with both hands. I can tell that she's back on her medicine, which always makes her slow.

"Hey mom," she says and comes over, puts her arms around her and leans against her.

Then she looks up at me. Her hair is frizzy and looks like a bunch of wires springing up off her head. She's lost some weight, but her face is still red and puffy.

"Hey daddy," she says and comes over to me. I put one arm around her and

squeeze her shoulder.

"How are you?" I ask.

"Fine. They say I'm doing better."

"How's the food?" I ask.

"It's okay. I'm not that hungry, though."

She goes back over to the bed and sits down.

"What are you watching?" Evelyn asks.

"Lonesome Dove. They've been playing all four episodes today."

I stay by the door and keep my hat in my hands. I turn it over and over, feeling the cotton mesh in the back slick against my hands.

"I've never seen them."

She's quiet for a few seconds. "Mom told me that you're going to the beach tonight."

"We don't have to," Evelyn says. "If you want us to stay, we can stay, Theresa."

"No," she says. "No, I would feel bad. Don't let me stop you from having a good time."

I cough. "We're leaving straight from here. We're just going down to the trailer to cook. Get away and have some old fogey time."

"What are you cooking?"

"Rock shrimp."

"With lemon juice?"

"Yeah, on the grill." She nods and closes her eyes, moves over to the bed and starts humming.

"Your favorite," I add.

She sits on the bed and looks back at the television. "Could you bring some back?" she asks.

"We could just cook some when you're back home," Evelyn says. "When you're feeling better."

"It won't be the same," she says and lays down. She turns away from us. Pulls the covers up to her chin. Evelyn starts to sniffle. I edge her towards the door.

"We should probably be going," I say.

"Don't worry about me," Theresa says. Her voice is thick and it sounds like she's swallowing her tongue.

"We'll call you later," I say. I have to get out of the door.

Evelyn has tears running down her face, smearing her mascara in her eyes, making little black trails. She walks over and kisses Theresa on the forehead.

"We'll call you as soon as we're there," she says.

We walk out quickly and down to the parking garage. In the car, I open a beer and start sipping it, pop some peanuts in my mouth, and put my hat back on. We stay there for a few minutes.

"Come on, Evelyn," I say. "She's so calm now. It's the medicine, remember? It's always slowed her down. Remember when she attacked me? The last time I saw her, she was like a wild animal."

"I know," she says.

"So don't cry. Please. Let's just have a nice trip. Remember the last trip we took down here? We sat on the porch and grilled, then went to the pier and did some dancing?"

"I remember," she says, smiling. "And you caught that shark off the pier and he bit your hand."

I smile and finish the beer. My head feels lighter. I have always been one for having a beer before a long drive. Just one tends to ease me some.

"Then let's go and have a good night away from all this."

I put the car into drive and steer out into the sun, the trees shading the afternoon light. It will be a three hour drive, and I'm already looking forward to driving through the tobacco fields of the lowcountry, even seeing all the tacky billboards for the country music places down at Myrtle Beach.

After a few miles, I stop and get a few pounds of shrimp. I run my hands over the package and then put them on ice.

My stomach is rumbling. I tell myself it is out of hunger. She was like a wild animal, that day, I say.

But Evelyn and I are survivors, from top to bottom. We've come from having nights when all three of us went to bed hungry, to me beating the bottle, to Theresa having her breakdowns.

So far, we have beaten everything thrown at us.

It's after eight when we pull into the driveway. Evelyn takes a bag of sheets into the house and starts making the bed. I listen to the sounds she makes in the other room. I like the noises she makes, from the rustling of the bag like pieces of paper being rubbed together to her occasional cough.

With Theresa in the house, the worst nights were all the ones when nothing happened. When it was dead quiet. Just waiting awake in bed in the house, wondering if or when she was going to get up.

I turn the hot water on and start with the stove.

I move quickly, but steadily, spreading the shrimp before me on a carving board. I pull out the Old Bay seasoning, lemon juice, and butter.

My daddy taught me how to start cooking before I was a teenager. He would take me out shrimping and crabbing, then show me how to peel and clean them before cooking them. The whole process, from catching them to eating them, could take all day.

When times were tough, he told me, you always have to have something to fall back on to get your mind off of things.

Before I know it, I have the pot going. The water is bubbling and thumping against the lid.

"Evelyn," I say. "Would you mind getting me a fresh beer out of the fridge?"

She comes in from the bedroom, eyes red around the edges. She has changed into sweatpants and a t-shirt, taken most of her make-up off.

She gives me a cold one and pecks me on the cheek.

"You look pretty," I say. "Without make-up, I mean."

"Thank you, Carlyle. I feel a little better. The car ride did me good." She reaches into the fridge and grabs a beer for herself, throws a pistachio into her mouth.

"Good," I say. "I'm about to put these boys in here."

Then the phone rings. It's a loud, shrill phone that I've always meant to replace. I about jump out of my skin.

Evelyn takes in a quick breath. "I'll get it," she says.

"Leave it," I say. "Who would be calling us?"

"Carlyle, it's probably her."

"Then we'll call her after dinner. She's fine."

It goes on ringing, Evelyn watching it the whole time, her eyes filling up again.

Then it stops.

"Evelyn, she's fine."

"We have a few minutes. We should call her before we start with dinner so we don't get interrupted. You know that will happen. It will just keep ringing until we pick up."

I sigh and sip my beer and go over to the stove. I stir the water and add some more salt and look at the raw shrimps sitting deveined on the board.

"Let's just have a nice time," I say. "It's what we need. We'll do all our worrying once we get back to Columbia tomorrow."

"What are we going to do when they let her out, Carlyle? Did you see how tired she looked? Maybe they'll keep her—"

"Evelyn, dammit!" I cut down so hard onto one of the shrimp that the knife makes a thud against the board and leaves a little groove on it.

"Sorry," she says. "I'm sorry."

"Don't cry anymore, please. I hate to see you cry."

"I'm sorry," she says again. "I know that I'm ruining everything."

I go over to her and squeeze her shoulder. "Just go get some fresh air outside, okay?"

She nods and smiles. As she opens the door, I feel the cool air from the beach blowing in and I imagine all the stars outside and the waves coming in under them.

I start dropping more shrimp in, hearing the water sizzle and pop and turn them a flamingo color.

Evelyn comes back in. She shakes moisture out of her salt and pepper hair.

"I feel better."

"Good, they're almost ready."

She comes over and looks down into the pot. "They sure are big ones," she says.

"Takes them a while to boil. You have to let them sit for a few extra minutes before they're done."

She runs a hand up my face absently, letting it go under my hair. I lean my face into it, then wince and jump back as her hand hits the bump on top of my head.

"I'm sorry," she says and draws back her hand as if stung. "It still hurts doesn't it? Let me get some medicine. It's in the car."

"I'm fine, it's just tender. I'm fine. Come back over, I love it when you run your hand through my hair."

She tries to smile. I feel her eyes on the pot.

"I don't know if I'm so hungry after all."

"Evelyn, please. We drove three hours. This is our night. Just eat a few with me."

"I don't want any shrimp, Carlyle."

"You love shrimp," I say and throw the rest of them in the pot. "Since when did you stop eating them?"

"Please, Carlyle, no yelling, please."

She's starting to cry again. I feel my hands shaking and grab the counters to

make them stop. "Go ahead and call her."

I try to slam the lid down on the pot. Except I miss and it sinks halfway into the boiling water, splashing it onto my arms. I feel it singe the hairs on my arm and see steam rising from my shirt. I let out a deep noise in the back of my throat. Shrimp fly out and hit the floor. One actually sticks to the cabinet above my head.

"Fucking great," I yell. "Look at what you made me do!" I don't know what I'm thinking. I knock over the pot and the water spills all over the floor. Evelyn backs away like it was poison.

The room is silent, but there are things happening in it.

Her mouth makes an "o" shape. Then she starts saying "I'm sorry" over and over.

I let out a breath and look at my arms turning pink, just like a shrimp.

"It's not too late to leave," I say. "Go on and pack the stuff up, we'll go home as soon as you're done."

She walks out. I hear her start with the suitcase.

I look over at the phone. I put a rag on my arm, feeling it burning underneath. I dial the numbers of the hospital, telling them that if we're needed, we'll be home by a little after midnight.

Then I stare at the shrimp laying all over the kitchen. I lean over and start picking them up. They're cool in my hands. I wash one off and eat it. Then another. Another. After a time, I get a few paper towels and sit down on the wet floor, wiping them off and stuffing them into my mouth as fast as they will go.

In a few minutes, I've eaten all but about five. I get a paper plate and take them to the sink, washing them off more carefully. I wrap them in plastic and put them on ice in the car for Theresa.

Michael Gause

Goya's Etchings of War

Before the brutal waves of butchers
and the brown blood
with screams dried within
a kind hand has drawn a shroud.
Only through the wretched weave
our fathers' ghosts are visible
indistinct and not so cruel
as when the hand of Goya
dipped a bloody pen and drew.

Wally Kaufman
March 1959

I Read

I read in the papers that Quemoy is the great
Trouble spot in the Far East.
And so Americans go in uniforms and with guns
Because the world is overpopulated anyhow,
And no one really cares about the army,
Because it's a clique, and cliques are
Psychologically bad for those who don't belong.
I read in the papers that the great god A&P
Has reduced the price of coffee so everyone
Can wake up in the morning and be nervous.
Or maybe it's really because the Latin Americans
Really like us after all, even if they do
Spit a little now and then, diplomatically.
I read in the papers that some man cut his
Wife's throat in a mercy killing,
Which doesn't seem very merciful at all,
Because the young, fair, debonaire people who drink
Non-fattening gin and tonics wouldn't approve.
I read in the papers that the whole world's
Going to hell, which doesn't really matter,
Because everyone knows that there is no hell.
And so the most important thing is living.
Which seems rather amusing, because no one
Really lives at all, if he doesn't read the papers.

Lorna Blane
March 1959

Suzanne Kurtzer

Moja Droga, Ja Cie Kocham:

An Endearment

I can find you in marigolds
waiting for me in these garden beds
your daughters asked me to weed delicately.
I like to tell myself you contoured this soil
to the shape of your Poland memories,
thinking of your life just as I do now.
From these living momentos, I can read your thoughts
that honored these sacred spaces
meant for growth and decay,
to each its own seasonal oranges and browns.
But I seem to always miss something,
hidden within this undergrowth,
and my eyes grow tired of never being good enough
or strong enough to maintain a purity of purpose—
to finish what you tried to tell us with your soiled hands.

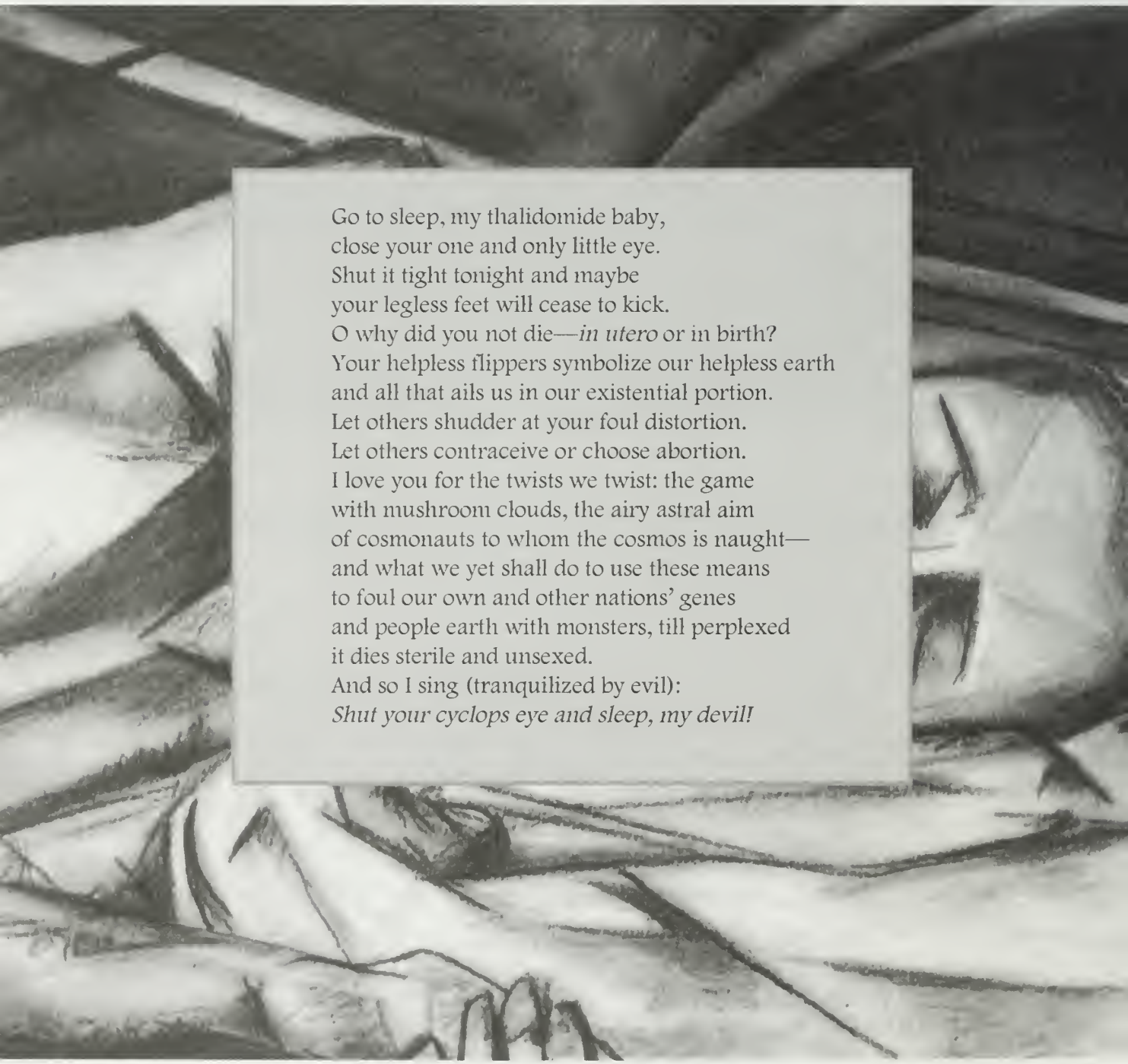
But, if what I needed to tell you
was without a language,
it would still somehow
be this easy to communicate with you,
you from whom I draw lineage and blood.
It would still be this easy
to go between our worlds—
among all the misunderstood lives,
misplaced photographs,
and mispronounced Ellis Island passports—
that have passed between us
just so I know you are my grandfather.
It is that pull for the topography of identity
that I want to hear you whisper to me
so that I can see myself
as first name me, last name you.

After I have forgotten myself
in these beds, in these attempts
to plant your words into my own language,
you tell me to stop.
You have done enough. moja droga—
We now understand each other.
The words, suddenly willing to put periods
to themselves, allow me to rest in this labor of longing
for the family of you. Only then
am I able to envision your body
encased in cherry wood and beautiful earth
as its own buried root in my understanding
of how I am to call this life,
how I am to pronounce this eulogy,
and how I am to name it so that others will hear the translation
between the Slavic and the English, you and I.
It has come time for the release,
for me to allow this earth to care for you now
because some things are not needed to be said.
I can now close my own eyes
and see all colors flying to me,
just as when I put my face full in your marigolds
thinking if only I could always
smell life this bright.

Lisa Rying

Lullaby to a Monster

Herman Salinger
February 1966



Go to sleep, my thalidomide baby,
close your one and only little eye.
Shut it tight tonight and maybe
your legless feet will cease to kick.
O why did you not die—*in utero* or in birth?
Your helpless flippers symbolize our helpless earth
and all that ails us in our existential portion.
Let others shudder at your foul distortion.
Let others contraceive or choose abortion.
I love you for the twists we twist: the game
with mushroom clouds, the airy astral aim
of cosmonauts to whom the cosmos is naught—
and what we yet shall do to use these means
to foul our own and other nations' genes
and people earth with monsters, till perplexed
it dies sterile and unsexed.
And so I sing (tranquilized by evil):
Shut your cyclops eye and sleep, my devil!

Untitled

Ellen Brenner
fall 1997

Confession of a White Liberal

"I want my freedom!" a man screams at me. He frightens me because he means what he says and he believes what he says. I think to him, Don't push me, Man; I'm not used to being pushed. Give me a few years to get used to you first. You never screamed that way before—not to me. *I* didn't do anything to hurt you. Leave me alone. And always it is my own hurt above his. I close my eyes and my ears and go on with my work, which is, after all, more important. My mind instinctively shuts out his cry. I think about how all social revolutions are slow and how it takes time. I think about my God-given constitutional right to put myself before all others, to be an individual. I even think about Nietzsche, grasping at straws. "I want my freedom!" he cries again, louder. My defense takes a new direction: Don't you know that nobody is really free? Democracy doesn't work. How can you be so naive as to believe in a myth called freedom?

"I want my freedom!" His insistence is beginning to wear me down. I fall in line besides his wife who marches silently, carrying her youngest child in her arms. I begin to understand, to want my own freedom. It is foolish, I tell myself, as I march along with strangers. Later I find myself in a dimly lit office over a funeral parlor. It is the office of the Chapel Hill Freedom Committee. A boy my own age asks me for a cigarette and we smoke together. I can barely see his eyes which begin to glisten out of his face which is darker than mine. He can't sleep at night, he tells me. He sits in the corner of his room and sings spirituals because he can't sleep. He is afraid of himself. He doesn't know how much longer he can restrain himself and allow himself to beat upon, spit upon, cursed. His whole body wants to fight back and he does not know how much longer he can wait. I tell him he must wait, that that is the only way he can win. I talk about rationality, means, ends, human fallibility, the segregationist who cannot change the structured patterns of his life in a day. He knows all that, but he doesn't feel any better. Neither do I. I am ashamed of my excuses. The next week I sit in the streets and hear with wonder the by-standers yelling, "Run 'em down." I say quietly, "I want my freedom." I watch as my companions are beaten up, the coats ripped off their backs by angry men, but I am not harmed because I am a girl, and I am white and pretty. A crippled boy is thrown to the pavement on the side of the road, and even in my fear I wish I too was beaten, because then we at least would all be treated equally. And later that night I lie huddled in my coat on the cement floor of the jail and listen to the Negro-white jokes that have been passed down through generations among my colored cell-mates. Yet I've never heard these jokes before. The way they tell it, it is the *white* man who never gets to heaven. And I know as I fall asleep that the people that they talk about in the jokes, the Miss Anns and Mr. Jameses, have never known the Southern Negro, but they will.

Sherry Sitton
April 1964

Polish Poem #1

several sad little polish refugees singing hymns in a well-lit chapel. were well-lit little sad polish refugees peasants they, too for wine was not a stranger. to them it was not; it was a sacred holiday and being this day collected in gregarious nature manifestations, gathered around candles and huddled against the young virgins, maidens of playful polish descention. contemplation was with them and hymns sung praise, thanks and polish hossanahs—kyriani holini popeye's were abundant as they spoke to the mystical god of oracles, the sweet pious nature of simple, backwoods but vain and hard, toil was known for ages amid the ancient polish paters

who, in view of the young of their dead past; ancestors of illegitimate but indefinite lineage, memories flooded the pervasuave immaturity of several mad polish refugees, where in carefully on their humble knees caught in frenzy of religious evaluation only a polish peasant can remember, a voice:

sons and daughters a deep excruciating rosin-coated voice, thick with the beefy diligence and nature's endowment of sense of humours inherent in polish simpletons.

o mighty recall and unitiring devotion cried, several of these lovable victims of homeless and broken family. for the chapel was gleefully in flames, cracking the mosaics and patterned cut glass windows adorning the nave and startling communion with the holy polish dieties. such piety and insipid zietgast explosive in this same but well placed polish chapel

hahlhh sighs rose in simultaneous and knives flashed as the playful polish children sang and fought in the aisles, nebulous of mad or angry older polish refugee parents whose concerned physiques were not in the least to be neglected condemn them if you will for lack of excitement as the coming of the festive season of the polish new year, provided a season of broken polish dreams.

sleighs mounted the prayer-ridden polish refugees as the long ride back to farms scattered all over the polish mountain side. dance was active stimulation, bonfires deeply rooted in polish tradition exploded and nearly destroyed the refugee peasant farms. gulping firewater, the night came in beautiful relaxation and surrender of phoebe, generous god-sun after warming the hearts of polish peasants, heroes and villains...beastly.

mad polish dogs ripped and tore the flesh of sad-eyed polish children caught in dancing urges around the hearth, fresh-cropped food was bubbling on the cold brick ovens lining the walls of polish thackeray-roofed huts. bubble bubble recoil at trubble went the centuries old treasure chest rhyme bespoke in quiet and dirty moments at midnight solitude walses in frothy and deliberate castration ceremonies. nowhere was the poet safe amid the hierarchical polish social status, duplex and insane by goal-ridden and truthful norms.

hence was the story ended: polish heroism notwithstanding. pox qual reality as an old polish prince used to insist.

H.P. Morgan
April 1968

Druize Village, Israel

Suzanne Kurtzer

Till Death Do You Part

They say I was conceived in love—
7 years, 2 miscarriages, and 1 premature
brother—later, long after my mother
began to think of herself as a cave.

You say you first felt me
as you knelt gathering strawberries
in the rows you tended like the children
you thought you could not have.
But I hung on and began in you
as a red crumpled tissue heart,
held together in my own primordial
conception of you, my first earth,
cleaving upon myself and with you
not wanting to let go of this life too.

Lisa Rying

Hiding

Jessica Snow

To Possession of Black Beauty

And it is dangerous to love blackness:
to be beautiful.

So springs the subfoliar panther,
shaded ancestrally
among familiar terraced shapes,
where the glitter of the fang serves
to trace and arc from perch to target.

And he is only black
on something less than black.

The assassin, properly attired,
will cradle the black handle
between the beginning of the wrist
and the ends of the fingers.

The edges,
set on spring and honed to gleam.
remain concealed, serene, until that moment
for the final movement.
Thus, to split the gloom, the blade reveals
a single curvature
in the flashing twists of neon signs.

Just as the prey beholds the coming
of the cunning executioner
who leaps from coil among familial leaves;
So at the last stroke of birth
can a man recoil to see the final figure
of a parabola with teeth.

H.W. Hutchinson III
April 1968

Street Vendor, Bethlehem

Suzanne Kurtzer

6 Billion Proud

Nuclear test ban treaty standoff
standoff of arms
arms that would never shake
shake it off. That country defeats that country
we were going for *that* country anyway.
We'll pay pregnant India to abort.
We'll forget it ever happened. It was
the boy's fault anyway, wasn't it.
Otherwise, we'll provide pink or blue booties
for exactly 36 months.

24 years of marriage, what do *you* think of us together?
Do you think it will work?
Nuclear test ban treaty standoff
standoff of arms--arms that never touch
never touch their son who bends to magenta,
and in China, a woman squints as
the doctor announces the verdict.
BOY.
the woman in her light green smock
sighs and loosens the muscles behind her neck.
Across the street from the clean, smooth
hospital, 200 orphans in dresses
sit around the edge of a grey room.
And billion billion billion billion billion billion child
cries her first cry in Nepal--impoverished, free, illiterate.
Our state of the marriage address...Who thought it would last?
stay together for the children
and just to be safe, add another one
to the pile.
standoff of arms
at arms length
rich, free, well-read
We flip through USA Today and look at the graphs
83% of China is literate
only 53% of India
I know about the third world.
We should help India.
I always root for the underdog,
the underdog with the most arms.
As the billion billion stick figures scrounge,
we pop electric blue miracle pills that
block the lard from our 50lb too fat bodies
and grit our teeth as we gorge on Pizza Grease
and sit on our dusty couches
and pray that our marriages will last.

Lee Bullock

Teeth

[A monologue]

I remember this one time we played kick the can in first grade and I was the last one left hiding. The girl that was supposed to find us wasn't playing right. She wouldn't leave the can to come look for us. She just stood there in the middle of the playground, craning her neck all around and I sat hiding in the red metal tunnel, watching her through this tiny little hole. The whole class knew I was the last one left only they had no idea where I was at. And so finally the teacher, Miss Albright, walks into the middle of the field and starts calling my name. "Holly! Come out now. Recess is over! It's time for class!"
Only I don't move a muscle.
The rest of my classmates are getting pissed off, starting to complain about it being too hot and all, and I just sit there feeling their eyes burning right through that tunnel.
At that moment I feel—I don't know what I feel. I just know I don't want to leave yet. I want her to say it. I want to hear her to say the words: Holly Davidson, you've won the game, you've won it all.
I have it set in my head, what happens next. I will come out slowly and I'll walk across the field and kick that can to bits. Right in front of everyone. And there'll be cheering, clapping. Thanks just to see I'm still alive.
Only nothing happens. Miss Albright just keeps calling my name over and over until one kid says, "Look in the tunnel."
And I feel a hand, circling my arm, yanking me into the wicked sunlight. And everything rushes in at once.
The needlepin stab as blood pumps back into my legs. All the Florida heat streaming through every pore in my body till eyes seek through solar waves the faces of classmates: who told her? Which was the one who told? Twenty-three kids all melt together in a hateful blur like maple syrup on oatmeal and I know the answer before I open my mouth.

"Did I win?"
"No," she says. "You didn't kick the can. You just sat there."
*
This one kid, Tommy Riverdale, feels kind of sorry for me after that. At lunch, he gives me a green Skittle to make up for it. I tell him I don't like the green ones.

He brings me a red one the next day.
I lick it and rub it across my lips so they're stained red like lipstick. I could kiss him then, I think, and wipe it off before he sees.

(There is a tear. In the corner of my eye.
I wipe that away, too.)

I watch a boy across the playground swing higher and higher, his feet kick-climbing the air. He falls off and lands on his face in the dirt. When he cries, a stream of sand oozes from his mouth.

"Tommy. What's your cross mean?" I ask.
"Jesus."
"I'll trade you my pretzels for another Skittle."
"Ok."
"Do you think it was fair that Miss Albright said I didn't win?"
"It doesn't matter," he says. "It's just a stupid game."
He bites a pretzel.
Snap.
"I think I should have won," I said. "I was the last one left."
"It's not in the rules."
"Well, they should *explain* the rules before they make you play."
"There are always rules they don't tell you. You just have to guess about some things."

A crowd starts forming around the boy with sand in his mouth. He loves the attention. He is not crying anymore.

"Would Jesus have saved you?"
"What?"
"Would Jesus have saved you if you fell off a swingset?"
"I don't know."
"That boy could've died."
"Yes."
Snap.
"Tommy, you think about dying?"
"No," he says. "Sometimes."
"Do you think you get to see God?"
He sits there with this pretzel hanging out of his mouth like a cigarette.
"No."
Kicking the picnic table wood with his feet.
I watch him eating my pretzels. I watch him eating the whole bag.
"I've seen God," he says. "Once. He was three inches high. He came and sat on my blanket when I was sick."
"You're kidding."
"I'm serious. This big. He was wearing a long white robe that looked like a piece of Kleenex."
"What did he do?"
"He just sat there."
"Did he say anything?"

Tommy snaps the pretzel with an abrupt white noise. Like dry bones.
"He said I would feel better. Only I didn't. I got sicker."
Snap.
"Maybe it was the devil," I say.
"Maybe."
Snap.

I can't explain what I do next. I don't know why I punch him. But I do. Looking across the playground at that boy by the swingset, smiling and pointing and telling about his close brush with death, I just pull my fist back and smash Tommy square in the face. He cries out, hand flying to his mouth.

I cry in.
And my hand falls to my side.

*

"Holly, you have been bad."
"Yes. I know."
"Very bad."
The trees flash by and my mother turns to check make sure my seatbelt's still buckled.
"Yes. I know."

*

This is how you smash someone's face in: right fist pull back and one all-at-once straightforward POW when he's looking away.
There's no stopping once you've made the choice.
There are bones in the mouth, there are teeth in the head that you forget even exist. And you need and you need to touch them close, even though your eyes are torn and hurting, even though your fist has lost its fingers.
This is how you break someone's face in so hard it hurts you more than it hurts them.

*

I have a scar. There.
Two lines on the back of my hand.
Two lines, two teeth.
I can't see it, but I know it's there.
(We girls don't kiss the way we used to.)

*

I am still.
Watching his fist open, forming a pool.
Red teeth: one, two, poking through the foam like baby dolphins.
People are running over, calling my name. But I do not move.
I am standing to watch him smile.
I am standing to watch him smile.
I am standing to watch him smile.

*

My mother thinks I am going to hit her. That's why I'm in the back seat. It's colder back here. She turns the air vents away from her.

*

Dr. Barnes has a bald pink head like the inside of a seashell, and a big office with huge cushiony chairs. I sit on the floor, Indian-style and decide I will not speak.

"Holly, how are you doing?"
"Holly, what grade are you in?"
"Holly, do you know why you are here?"

"She's normally not like this," Mom says. "I don't know what's gotten into her."

Dr. Barnes studies me a second, then gets up and starts going through a drawer. I think he's gonna bring out this electroshock stuff like they show on tv, but instead he comes out with this stupid wind-up toy. It's shaped like a big mouth attached to a pair of pink plastic feet. He winds it up and it bounces across the carpet, teeth chattering together like it's too cold or something.
One, two.
Baby dolphins, nipped in the bud.
I watch it bounce across the room, up till it hits against a table leg and it just stays there, bouncing stubbornly even though it's not going anywhere. The doctor laughs, too loudly, and picks the teeth up, still chattering in his hand. "Sometimes it's okay to laugh," he says. "Laughter is good for you."

I say nothing. I watch the pattern on the carpet until the flower print becomes three-dimensional.
I keep staring at a white spot rising from the carpet.
Taking on the appearance of a tiny robe, no bigger than a piece of Kleenex.

"The least you could have done would be to talk to him," Mom says. "Christ, we drive you for two hours..."
"You feel like you've won something, breaking all the rules." This is Dad, dragging me to the parking lot by my hand. "I bet you feel real important."
"No, I didn't win," I say.
*
"I just sat there."
This to my class, this to Miss Albright.
This to Tommy.
*
"I *did* see him. When I was sick."
"You're kidding," I say.

"Yeah," he says. "I am."
And he snaps a pretzel and I watch him chewing—up, down, little particles clinging between his two front teeth and I don't know what to think anymore.
And I want to kiss him, but I can't.
There are some rules you don't—you will never—understand.

A. M. Gluvna

Beyond the Nursery

Andersen's a Christian
except during rush hour on the bottleneck
and Jack told Jill to use the pill
but did she? No!
and Jackie, O!
the dirty tricks
a nasty mix
if blood and blame and blows
Then Humpty dumped me
and it hurt
dumped me down
to watch me drown in rings
of rainy roses
rounding me surrounding me
in casha, cache-moi
(hide the feed then feed the hide)
I heard the earth is falling up
but hold me down
or goose me, mother, loose me!
Make me the sign of a wave
They're into grating me
to see how much I'll take
well thug me drug me
just unplug me
I've had enough of gold
and locks and chains and shocks
and rhymes that bend but never
end.

Kathryn Van Wert

Poor Noodles, Rich Noodles

During those days, I walked on prickling
feet and managed to
smile a bit
when he came to my station
and laid his grease-lined forearm on
my shoulder.
During those days, when the sun descended, I didn't know
I wanted it to lose track of time behind Asia.
Once a week, I reached past the Original Chicken Oodles of Noodles
for *Cajun Chicken* to make it to
Friday, which hardly ever came.

This morning, crawling through rush hour
in a cab virgin to English tongue, I flip
through the list of things that *must* be done,
noting when, how, and for whom
presentationin102Dlunchw/carlpickupdrycleaninglaughwhenhelaughs
3 p.m., I slurp down spicy chicken noodles and
whirls around as the phone slices the
even ringing of the fax
checkthebudgetisthereroomforonemoreaddition?
tellMiriamtostartfromscratchthelasttimewetriedthiskindofmaneuverwewerenearlysued.
6:33. The last curve on the sun dips behind the blue skyscraper
I close my eyes. *stay. stay down.*

Lee Bullock

My amputated life itches.
Many drinks into the night
toward a dull day,
I yearn a cure.

My wife no longer bothers to bitch.
What is this thing
gone as a gong
from a bell?

I have given myself
all I can.
At last, I have
given myself away,
not even settling
for second best,
third best, fourth...
settling.
The rent is paid.
The TV works.

The Miracle Worker

George Wood
Fall 1970

---

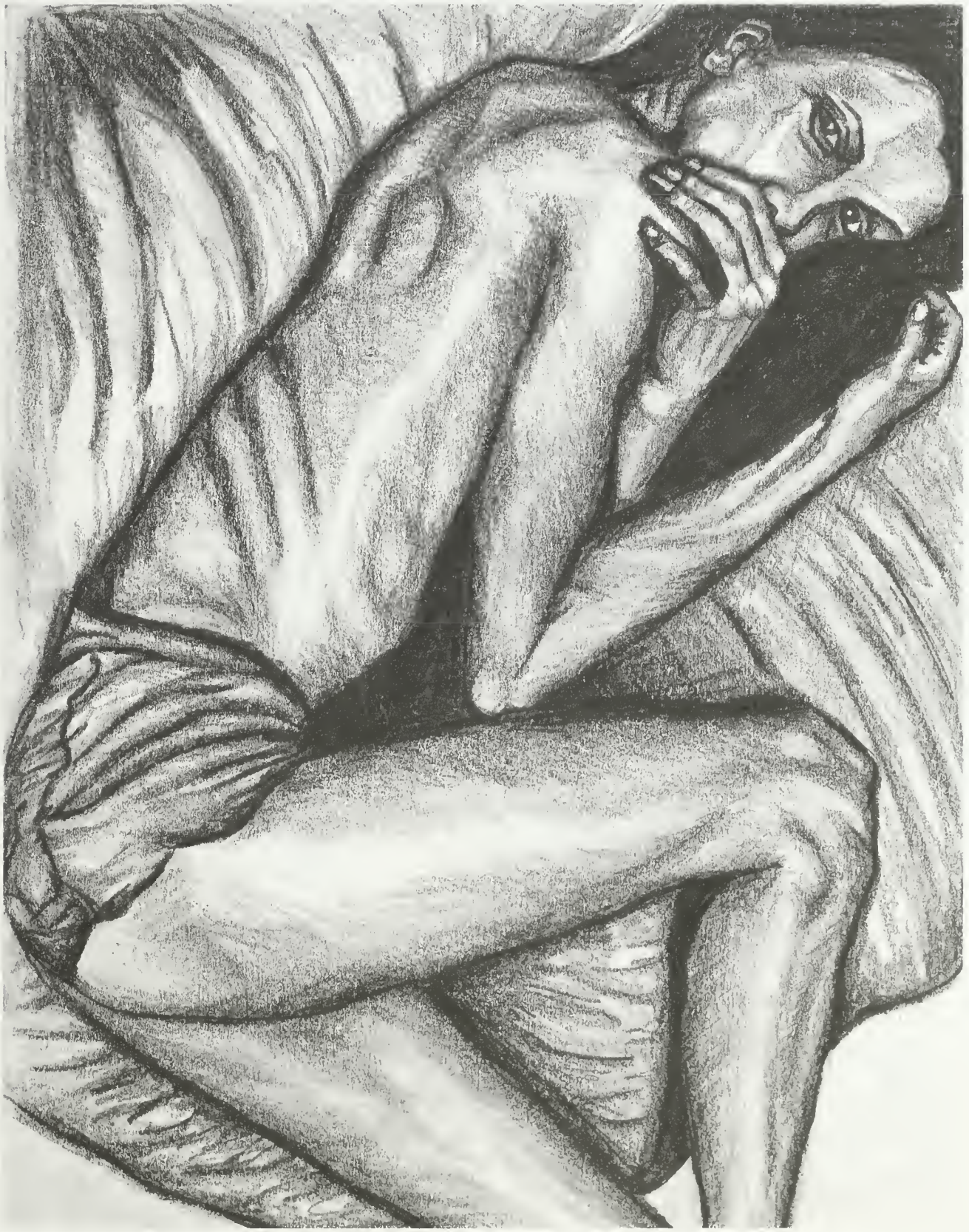
here I am dying

Jennie Berkesch

Look at you, she says
Your hair, so soft, you could be pretty
your skin, so pale, you could be pretty
your legs, so strong, you could be pretty
A few weeks
Don't eat that,
a good girl never eats
think of the children starving
they are beautiful
don't you want to be beautiful?
No, no, I cry
I was born lucky
here I am
dying.

Exposed

Jackie Myint



conversation with my mother

it's me i'm fine school is
i wanted you to know
i forget how old you are,
then i take dad's age and subtract five

again: hello. i can't talk to you
for long i wanted you to know i'm alright
(I wanted you to know
i hope you are

again: it's me i wanted to apologize
in advance if you read my words
as swords if you read my words

it's me (again) i can't talk to machines
i can't talk to silence you need to know
i wrap my self in silence when i think of you.

you still have all the pictures from my
childhood; you know
you don't own me because you own those.

:again: it's your daughter. n. female child in relation to her parents; female descendent; female member of family etc.
this is one thing i can tell you.

do you remember? it's my birthday
soon (again) i'll be twenty-one
years away from you
on the anniversary of susan smith's arrest
(i wanted you to know)

and bobby's birthday: the day she killed
her sons. (you killed your son
every time you told him what you wanted him to know)

: **coincidence** *n.* remarkable concurrence of events without apparent causal connection.

i am not saying
you wanted me dead just (again)
your body might have known
at seven months you

would not always want me
alive. this is i'm just saying

did you know that the greek word for uterus was
hystera so: hysterical from the womb
each time we speak i become hysterical
(again: this is your eldest daughter)

it's me again i just wanted you
to know i just wanted

Courtney Queeney

---

all in one breath

where are you going with
this is not my
problem is you just can't
tell me why so
much rain today snow
tomorrow is another
day layered upon day makes for long
weeks ago I never thought we'd be
here we go again I tell
you never can tell when the sky will
drop it just drop it I
say don't I know you from
somewhere over
there you
go away from this
place it in the
cornered again
by doubt and circumstances beyond our
control your
self control your
self control

Laura Podolsky

A Strange Affair

laying flat
lone in
thin cold wane of Herbie Hancock

felt something drop out
from my chest
crash silent through matress layers
second floor, air and earth.
freaked.out.

surfeit caffeine and leftover
high smoke.
misled taut muscle ask what

was it left and
where had it gone?
in the grog-mist
of lacksleep.
flash.

man's curly hair in my
hand and sweet
soap-smelling skin.

No-poem deserving man with
old-fashioned southern
charm/trouble language and
player/gentleman/cogniscenti
moves

No-poem deserving man
who does

kiss kiss me in sleep.

Background:

good-girl pressures overborne
and rebirthed me on a tightrope
in a close-windowed room.
eternally candlelit and
I everhigh curling
up to float mid
earth and moon.

I become
somebody's baby
in a swinging cradle of night
hours.

Listen with ears closed to sugartalk.He
says,If you were my girlfriend..."

hussssshhhhhhh, cheri.
I touch you for
melodic braille codes

waking tandem in cinnamon and orange juice
sunshine,
in a bodily fit that's
jazz-neat.
through musical crannies
and neckline nooks
us as improv notes popping
and passing.going nowhere.
It's a strange affair.

tangled chess moves and ripple
piano key slow key smoky mosaics
this thing i can't
figure out is going as it comes
passing in ragged joy, through
mutations of shifting light.

Mara Jebsen

The Ways of Women

The Old School

The women who came to the frat where I lived
arrived by mail; glossy, air-brushed, designed
to lay as smooth on the mind
as they did on the page.
Men imprisoned in what they feel
need women, lithe and perfect and unreal,
to slip through the bars,
to satisfy the imagination.

The Poetess

Stu, Kerry and I go to hear the feminist poetess.
See the poetess. She is a pretty blonde.
Two points for her. She says, Beware of men.
We laugh. Two points for us.
Women around us are banging their chairs.
Young girls are crying, making fists.
The words of the poetess
surround us like a mob,
brandishing sticks
and chains.

The Housewife

In her kitchen, over coffee she tells me:
when I was a young girl my cousin
taught me to make out.
She and I kissed so lovely
and the taste of her mouth
was not like my husband's.
I still remember it.

David Giber
Fall 1979

The New Mysticism

She was 17, liberated and into astrology.
Back at her place we had sex and tea.
She said: *I see confusion in the leaves,*
watch for a sudden change
positions rearrange,
women grow strange.

Swinging skirts left the street. No wind. Bare trees.
Leaves fill the roads like refugees.
A chill falls over fields of men
huddling together in a game
which doesn't begin; with the old plays gone, no one wins.

Stop this mysticism I yelled, *Don't be hostile, don't rhyme.*
She said: *If only we'd met some other time.*
You were the man on the white horse,
I can have no such man in my life,
I must depend on myself.

I tried to understand.
What can you know? She demands,
There are no longer places to learn,
no words which make it work,
no slogans to shout.
We built the trap and can't get out.

I flew to the coast.
I slept in the open.
If afraid, I climbed trees.
She'd walk through my dreams, never making a sound.
I'd wake, entangled with the ground.

When hockey season came, I returned.
The snow lay sleeping.
Get up I said, *I've been dreaming of spring.*
She said: *The nights are shooting stars,*
Wishes for women bring skies of wars.
Call me stargazer, I said, *I'll call you moon,*
We'll balance the tides.
No. She said. *Don't call me anymore.*

Last Exit

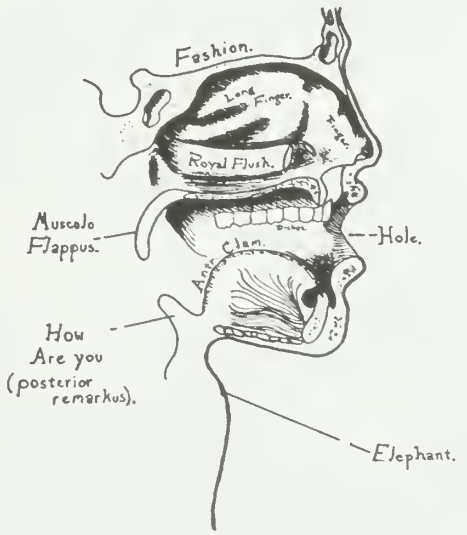
Jason Nichols

Meatloaf

When I woke up this morning I found a note from my left hand. It said, "the opposite hand knows more." That is it. I didn't know what to do. I decided to wash my face and crawl back into bed for a while. That I did. When I woke up the next time I felt much shorter than I did the day before. I knew something was fucked up so I called my girl to see if she knew what was up. You see, my girl is studying to be a doctor. She once met this guy at a piano recital who told her that doctors make upwards of 200,000 dollars a year when they hit their peak. And then she said to him something to the effect of, well sure, but there are all the years of schooling, the loans, the muffins and the fruit for the next door neighbors, that pair of slippers my husband will want, food for the kids, a couple of cars for me. After all that you only have a hundred and fifty thousand per year left and you know how fast that goes. She and the guy had a good laugh I think. I wasn't there so I cant really tell you exactly how it went. So anyway I was feeling short and grabbed a phone book. I should have used it to call somebody else cause my girl wasn't in, but I used it to stand on cause I felt short. I don't think though, that I would have found the listing I needed. I mean, who do you call when you feel short. Freud is dead isn't he? I once read a book by Freud. It was all about sex and stuff. I think it was called all about sex. No that was the book my mom gave me when I was about 22. She gave it to me and told me that now that I was getting to the age when I would start to think about girls maybe this would be a good book to read. I didn't want to burst her bubble so I just nodded and smiled, but it got me thinking. Maybe mom isn't as wacky as she seems. By then I had thought too much about it and decided the best idea would be to go back to reading the paper because there was an ad for a job I wanted. I forget what it was. I didn't ever get it. I mean obviously, because if I got it I would remember it. I mean, come on. The book by Freud wasn't called all about sex, but that was its subject matter. He would say crazy things about snakes and stuff and how they are like penises. I mean, come on. I think somebody needed to give him an evaluation. Maybe he thought snakes were penises, but I think snakes are snakes and penises are penises. At least that is what the book all about sex said. I read it a couple of times. I went outside to see what the weather was like. It was pretty much the same as the days before. I mean, weather comes in patterns. But it got me to thinking that I could be a meteorologist. Seriously though, what do those people do? They sit in a room for a while looking at colored maps and then take a step outside to see if it is raining. Then they stand in front of the same maps and talk about the different colors and how they took a step outside a little while ago and it wasn't raining. But it might later. I mean, come on. One of my friends dads back home was on the local news team and he would come home and make fun of the meteorologist they had there. Apparently he smelled like shrimp. I think the jokes were usually making fun of the fact that he must have some sort of shrimp cologne or shrimp soap that he used. But I don't think so. I think he probably just ate shrimp a lot. They are pretty smelly when you get right down to thinking about it. So I was going to go out and try to find out where my girl was, but I figured that since she wasn't at home I wasn't going to find her. I decided it would be in my best interests to get a haircut, but then I remembered that I didn't have money because I stopped my job. Sometimes I would go into work and say stuff about the other people that had to do with how they smelled. None of them smelled like shrimp or had dads that were meterologists that would know anything about shrimp, but they would smell like some sort of fruit shampoo or cream or some such thing. I didn't like it and so I would say stuff about it. There was this one guy there who would always make this face at me because he was the manager and thought that because he was the manager that if he made the face I would stop making fun of how the people

smelled, but I usually didn't. Apparently this guy was a real religious guy and he would go to church. I believe it because I saw a couple things he did that were pretty weird. I mean that he would sometimes look up to the ceiling sometimes after he had hurt himself and instead of swearing he would yell THANK YOU JESUS really loud. I guess that was really the only thing he did that was kind of weird, but he also wore a cross on a chain around his neck. I decided that since I didn't have any money I would try to go find some food in the kitchen. My girl was there last night and sometimes she brings things over and cooks for me because I act like a baby and pretend that I cant do anything for myself. So she cooked a meatloaf last night and I still had some of the meatloaf so I put it in the toaster because that is all I have to cook things because my oven broke last night after she cooked the meatloaf. So I cut it into slices and put as much as I could cram into the toaster in there and then I set the toaster for level 5. I think it is really weird that people could want different settings for their toast or their meatloaf. Because I mean when you think about it you just say I ate toast, or I want toast, you don't say I

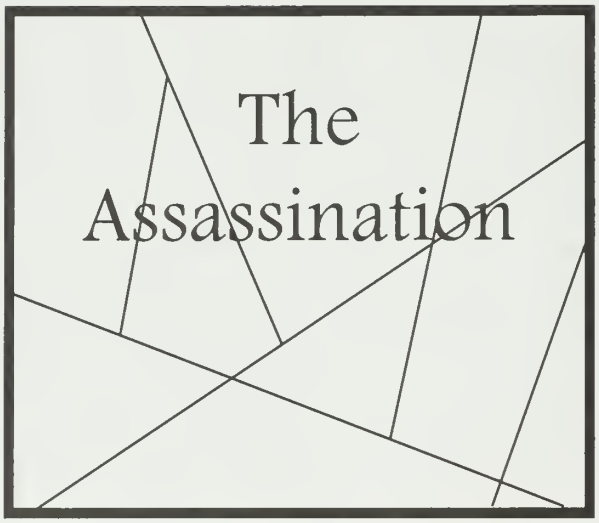
Supermodel Interior



Pitchaya Sudbanthad
Spring 1997

want toast that is toasted on level 3 or give me some level 2 toast. But I guess the world is pretty crazy today and capitalizm is all around and if somebody wants toast that is slightly better toasted than normal toast then they are going to get it as long as they didn't quit their job because of smells and have enough money to buy the better toaster. By now my meatloaf was starting to make popping noises and was smoking and smelled pretty bad. I couldn't get it out because it was so fat from being cooked so I turned the toaster over and banged it pretty hard on the top of the table. The meatloaf came out in chunks and I put them on a plate and started eating them. There were sections that burned my mouth and others that were cold, like ice is cold. There was this one time where after my swim team won the event I decided to celebrate by pouring ice on the teams that didn't win. They didn't think it was very funny and it took a while for everybody to figure out what I was trying to do. People were yelling that I should not be allowed to stay and watch, but after I explained I think everybody saw what I was getting at with the ice. Right after that day a couple months later my dad got pretty mad when I celebrated again and threw some tools at his car he had been working on. He and the car drove off and I didn't see him again for a while. I think he gave the car to my brother who plays football and runs pretty fast. Anyway by this time I had finished my meatloaf and was just about to go see what movies I could watch when the Helen who lives on the other side of my kitchen wall came over to see how I was. I was pretty good and I told her so. She said it smelled like I had been cooking again and we both agreed that I had. I mean come on, it was pretty funny.

Matt Morriss



a crazy copter angle frame of dandelions
his coattails edge the bright civilian horde
our candidate
vast megaphone
balloons
some apparition in a whirlwind
a fast foreboding that the sky will break in two
these hands

Barry George
Spring 1980

Reading, Reagan, and Religion

When Hitler spun his office chair
to the window poised above the boulevard,
the duck-stepping Nutcrackers, row by row,
popped their salutes and spun their heads.
He whipped back his hair tottering over his forehead
and spilled a teethy grin.
In the year zero, the still place hit.

Just as a motorbike streams through the suburbs
or as a paddle boat barges through a perfectly man-made lake,
I motor towards the altar.
A kneeling child whispers a Sesame Street rhyme:
"Which one of these is not like the others..."
Father Berry pushes forth his hand and drops the offering.
The bread totters in my hand like a flipped nickel spinning.

At night, often, when masturbation and Nytol fail me
I count the cracks in God's ceiling above me
or sheep marching.
I plan to dream of power and Reagan,
of mean things, sexual things.
Popping the Sony Walkman padding bubbles
gives me the edge.
I dream of souls popping in hell.
Onward Christian soldiers,
marching towards the sunsets,
over the cliffs.

Christopher Foster
Spring 1989

My Piano Teacher's Wife at His Funeral

Sing to me in the voice of your softest sweater,
Wool-woven and kissed by buttons, that prolongs
The swarming tingled grace of barefoot weather,
And melts like the sigh of butter, cradled in the palms of warmer songs.
Shelter me, for I am untied tonight,
And pose oblique to cushion my aloneness in Cheshire smiles,
That keep this songless cabin company, and might
Cradle me too for a while.
Oh! He loved you.
He loved you like a son,
And he adored you in that sweater voice
That candled my table: dusty, alone.
Help me outlive this, sleeping bereaved outside through broken raw weeps of rain.
Sing to me sweater-soft between alkaline storms to quiet my buttoned and wool-woven pain.

Terry Schuster

The Grace of Barefoot Weather

Kate McCutcheon

Lifelines:
Kukes, Albania

I.
The rooms here have no corners; tough tent canvas
the color of wet dead spring leaves
ripples in the breath of breeze;
the stakes are bars on windows
where I used to watch the rain wash
the world its color: grow things as if pulling them up
by slim shimmering threads; shattered
by hail that smoked and stung: smote.
Everything is heavy; the roiling voices which rock
me are the sounds of old men stretched taut
across uncertainty, vibrating low with fear;
the faces of the women are fading
into outlines of faces: stripe for nose,
two quick slashes for eyes, lips the sharp edges
of knives; flesh is irrelevant:
a luxury for the very young and the very old.
They talk about the weather
because the soup is thin:
because the soldiers are blond, foreign
with names that are like strange fruits
on our tongues:
because my shirts are wearing thin,
my elbows beginning to show.
Will it rain: tomorrow? There will be rain
heavy with the ashes of our village,
with the gases that creep in faceless
to spread themselves above our upturned gaping mouths;
our lives are returning to us
from the sky.

II.
He was only twenty; short years
the way we count them now.
Older brother: guardian: demon.
He haunts me through the mushroom village
of U.N. walls and bread.
As a small child I thought his hands
were large enough to fill with sky
so I could drink it from them.
They took him from me finger by finger
until there were none left to catch
the sun. Unhinged. I cannot hold
anything. I am restless; my hands
are still, here in this hive of hunched mothers
and tents. Today one of the soldiers
(they are all alike—so broad—so
square at the jaw) let me touch his head;
it was softly feathered with hair
the color of good bread: like a fruit:
like a new bird blind and downy.

III.
It will rain today: rain into us.
The hard rain still toothed with the bite of winter
churns together waste and earth
until they are indistinguishable;
the darkness of it coats us: wafts over us.
Somewhere they have burned everything
and my brother rises
ascending: phoenix; the dress my mother wore
the day she fell in love with (met) my father.
Here the babies mew for milk.
I would knit if I had yarn:
scarves to cover the sharpness of menís throats:
to swaddle the children:
to hide the thinness of old white hair. Perhaps
tomorrow it will end: we can go home.
First the rain: then we can go:
home. There are no corners here;
when the bulky wind heaves in
all shelter changes shape. I bury my head
in the musky fabric beside the rough stake
and the first drops which I cannot see
are flat notes through the canvas.

Alexis Blane

The Gravity Wise

Julie and Pete do not know each other very well. He knows that she grew up with Jack. She knows that he was Jack's roommate. He knows that she will be at Georgetown in the fall. She knows that he worked in the Academy library on Sunday mornings. He knows that she got a 1600 on her SAT's, but is certain of little else. He has heard, though he does not believe it to be true, that she is anorexic. He has also heard that she helped a freshman cheat on his biology final. She has heard that he financed his education by betting his work money on the horses at Rockingham Park, and on the occasional Celtics game. Except for Jack's death, there is little between them.

Julie had been told to call Pete. "I'm driving up there," she had said. "You can come with me. The cheapest plane ticket is six hundred dollars, and Logan is rained in, they said. I guess there's Amtrak. But there's always layovers and whatnot with Amtrak." She said it this way so that he could not refuse. Though she has a charitable nature, she did not offer out of charity; in fact she did not want to drive the George Washington Bridge herself.

It is two in the afternoon. The light is formless, diffuse, but Julie is wearing sunglasses. She is driving. Pete is holding a map on his knees, tracing their route in green highlighter. Now that they are off the Capitol Beltline, it's I-95 all the way through Philadelphia, Trenton, Newark. Then on past New York, and then they'll get on 91 at New Haven and switch to 84 in Hartford. It's not too far after that; they can follow the signs to Portsmouth. Pete knows the way to Biltmore from Portsmouth.

"How long is this drive?" He asks, though he probably knows better than her.

"About ten, ten or eleven hours. I've never made the drive in this direction, but ten hours."

"Is this the first time you've been to D.C.?"

"Unless you count the time I visited Georgetown. But that's not technically D.C."

"Is that why you came down here for the term? To get used to it?"

"No. I came for the weather."

Pete looks at her but can't read her expression through her sunglasses. "Right."

"I'm kidding. No, seriously, I'm just tired of classes, I guess. No, that's not really why. I needed a change."

"Yeah, that was it for me too." Pete leans his elbow on the armrest. "Nice car you have here."

"Oh sure. This car is nearly as old as I am."

"Well, you know, given that we're not supposed to have cars, it's a pretty nice one."

Julie only pushes her sunglasses up on her head, and still Pete cannot read her expression. He plays with the lock on the passenger door. "Hey," she says, "tell me if you want to stop for anything." She is feeling hungry, and also oddly accountable towards him; she would rather that they stop when he wants too.

"Okay. Tell me when you want me to take over."

For a while they say nothing; Pete stares out the window at the roadside rushing off behind them. He watches the signs count down the miles to Baltimore, to Philadelphia. He is startled when the car swerves and a horn sounds from behind them. Julie slows the car, pulls it into the slow lane. She slows some more, and parks on the shoul-

der. There is no breakdown lane, just a strip of jagged pavement that gives way to soft, weedy ground.

Pete waits for her to speak. "It's just, I was merging. You would think that if they could put men on the moon, they could set up mirrors so there's no blind spot." She stops and smoothes her hair back off her forehead as if she wants him to speak. She smiles with her mouth and laughs a nervous laugh. Then, "I'm kind of tired. You want to drive?"

When they are back on the highway Julie watches the winter-faded billboards of Philadelphia go by quicker than she can make out what's on them.

Pete is thinking to himself, hoping that the tears will not come; he always becomes a little blind when he cries, and he is driving. He can't remember the last time he cried, and he does not feel very sad. "There was an accident," he says, almost without meaning to. "Years ago, wasn't there?" He has heard about it, but does not know how it happened.

"We were twelve." Julie does not look away from the window, from the highway signs and off-ramps.

"And?"

"And we were at the beach, not on Cape Cod, but more north. Near Salem. Salem with the witch trials?"

"Right." The edges of his mouth hint at a smile.

"Usually the tourists aren't around there, that's why we were there. Jack had been on water skis once, only, and he kept begging his father to let him try them again. It was so hot and motionless on the water, and the waves were so low. I think that's why he agreed.

"He was doing fine They were going along fine. Jack's father was taking wide turns, so he wouldn't fall. It was when he put his hand up, to wave at me that he lost his balance. He fell face first into the water. The force of it must have pushed water up into his lungs, or knocked him out cold, I don't know. He just disappeared. His father didn't even notice. He kept driving around, with the rope skipping along behind the boat."

She pauses, clears her throat. Then she shakes her head, just slightly.

"What I should have done, what everyone told me I should have done, was turned around, walked quickly but calmly to a phone, called 911, and saved the day. Instead, I ran into the water and swam to where I thought he had fallen. But it's a funny thing, out there, there are waves that are far bigger than they seem from the shore, and currents that make you think you're swimming in a straight line when you're not. Over those waves, you can see the beach all right, but you can't see what's between you and the shore, or what else is on the water, unless it's tall, like a sailboat.

"I found him, though. He was floating face down. His life-jacket was all twisted around him, but it had kept him floating. Later, when I walked into the emergency room, barefoot, my mother yelled at me for losing my shoes. I had kicked them off while I was swimming. I remember being a little mad at Jack then, because it was sort of his fault I lost the shoes, and it seemed like she wouldn't have yelled at me it had been more serious, his condition. I mean, that's what I thought at the time. We were young." Still she is looking out the window intently. Julie is finished telling the story, though she has not spoken of how pale and faintly blue Jack's skin was as she was pulling him through the waves or how she vomited on the sand when she finally reached the beach

or the loud fight her parents had that night about whether Mr. Taylor had been drunk at the wheel of the motorboat that afternoon.

"It was different after that. We weren't really friends. It wasn't until we went to Biltmore together that we got close again. Maybe that was only because we didn't know anyone else in even the slightest way. I don't know."

Pete tightens his grip on the steering wheel. "But were you?"

"Was I what?" Julie is not annoyed, only confused.

"Were you, you and he, close when you got to high school? It didn't seem that way. You weren't around much, with him." Pete speaks carefully.

"I guess we weren't close, in the typical way I would use the word." She stops while she pulls her hair out of a ponytail, smoothes it as it hangs over her shoulders, then puts it back up again. "He knew me better than anyone else there. I could say I knew him better than anyone else there."

"Did you know he had a car?"

"Of course. You didn't?"

"No, I knew he had a car. I can't remember him ever telling me that he was driving it. I don't remember anyone ever saying that they had been out in it with him."

"Well, he had a reason for driving it this time, you could say."

Pete isn't listening. His eyes are strained and he is tired and a thought has come to him. "Julie, what are we going to do when we get there? It's eleven already. We're only in Connecticut. Where are we going to stay?"

Julie sits up. "Well, let's get a room somewhere. Soon."

"All right. Look for gas-food-lodging signs."

Pete pushes the car to eighty; he is tired but he does not want to ask Julie to drive. He passes several cars, just taillights in the dark air. Miles go by, and Julie tells him to take an exit ramp.

They lie in the darkness in their forty-nine dollar motel room. Pete knows he will not sleep, but he needs some rest. The room is dim, not dark, because he has left the curtains partway open so that he can watch the car. Julie had pointed to the police station across the street. "Nobody is going to steal the car," she had said.

Julie rustles around under her covers. "Pete," she says. "You know, I think Jack drove his car off the road."

"That's what they said," he answered quietly.

"No. Just listen to me for a moment. I got a call from him, two days ago. You know what he said? He said, 'Remember that time, up at Manchester, when I nearly drowned? And you saved me? I've been thinking about it, and maybe it would be better if you hadn't.' I wasn't thinking at the time, but it makes sense now."

"Julie, he didn't do it deliberately. You don't understand. With guys it's different. A woman commits suicide, and it's like, life was too much, she couldn't handle it anymore. With a guy, he just wants out." Pete stares at the ceiling, though he can't see it.

"Well, maybe he wanted out?"

"He didn't want out, Julie. He had everything."

"What if it didn't make him happy?"

"Well, what did you say to him then? Did you ask him what he meant?"

"I started to, but someone came into his room, and he shut up, and I couldn't ask him then. Started talking about his grades, how they were slipping, something like that."

Pete climbs out of his bed. He stands at the window, looking at the car, at the grease-slicked puddles shining like rainbows in the parking lot. He walks over to Julie's bed and sits on the edge of it. "Look, you couldn't have done anything for him. You couldn't have saved him. It was an accident. Nobody wants to learn that lesson, but it's patent fact. Don't ask why. Things just get harder when you ask why."

"But, Pete," she begins.

"It's like this. There are things that are separate from us. You just have to trust that they are so." He feels that he is not making sense. He pauses, thinks, lowers his voice. "There's this lake where I live. It's called Lake Boon. It's basically this unappealing lake; it has no beaches, and it looks like it might have bloodsuckers living in it. Once every seventeen years, or some unexpected number like that, these jellyfish come out for two weeks. All the rest of the time they lie dormant, but supposedly they come out and breed and the parent generation dies and the jellyfish eat just about everything in the pond, and then they go dormant again. The interesting part, though, is that when the parent generation is dying, they fluoresce. So there's this otherwise ordinary lake, fluorescing at night. People go see. It's funny though. It doesn't show up on film. Because of the flash. The fluorescence disappears." There is no answer from Julie. It is late; Pete feels he must be in a strange dream.

He lies down on Julie's bed and puts his arms around her, tight, and he can feel her bones through her skin and through the thin blankets, he can feel her heartbeat through his side, and she wakes up when he put his arms around her, and his breath gentle in her ear is the sound of the tide coming up on that beach in Manchester, where usually the wind is so stiff it hurts the lungs.

Amy Vayas

Nature's Mirror

Jason Nichols

Ten Things Which Will Try to Say Who I Am

My life has no greatest moment. Moments are moments which pass, and even if the best one came on June 20, 1989 at Nags Head, N.C., it would only be so because I call it that, and wouldn't matter to anyone but me anyway.

My friend Roger always thought he'd be a doctor until he went to college and failed every course in the biology department. His career now will never make him happy. That's why I've never wanted anything in particular; expectations are useless.

I like walking alone at night in the city. I hope someday some punk kid with a plastic-handled switchblade tries to mug me. If this ever happens I will beat the living shit out of him.

My experience with generous people is that they usually desperately want something back from you. We may have a long acquaintance and I may only ever give you a single thing, but you will never owe me anything.

I saw Dougie Wilkins the other day. He finished law school last year, and he asked me if I knew what I wanted to do. I said nothing. He asked what I was interested in and I said I don't know. He said I have to be interested in something. I said I was presently studying post-American-dream middle-class brainwashing. He brightened up and said there was a start and it sounded very interesting.

I've always bitten my fingernails down to bloody stumps. People accused me of being nervous, but my life has nothing to be nervous about. I'd just much rather feel pain than boredom, and I always feel boredom.

Nothing *really* sad has ever happened to me.

The mass of men lead lives of quiet desperation. Some despair about things like finding happiness in their lives, whatever that means. If I despair about anything it's that the actual value of any asset must be calculated considering the opportunity cost as well.

If you don't like me I will never have liked you anyway. You will always have been such a jackass.

One morning I awoke and Rebecca had her ear to my chest, listening for something. I asked her what she was doing and she said that she had been suspicious for several weeks now that I wasn't really a human being after all, but something else. That was not long before we split up for good; she was really wacko.

Josh Robertson
Spring 1995

Appendix 1

8-Shot Manifesto! for the Successful Confrontation and Immobilization of Anti-history

from *Sunshine's Darkness: A Revolt Against You*
by High Plains Drifter

Statement of Intent: herein lie the 8 tenets on which our philosophy for the successful confrontation and immobilization of anti-history are based; we being 8-Shot Uzi! (see J's *Sunshine's Darkness: a Revolt Against You* for a simultaneously sprawling and concise history of the organization), unified by a stridently vehement belief in the 8-Shots! listed hereafter as well as by several smaller but ultimately no less large points, i.e., "buckshot." The successful placement of all **8-Shots!** on the targets (local universal ideological sexual societal) proposed, proposals made ***by the singular Uzi her/himself(!)***, will indubitably throw into chaos the "life-systems" currently regarded as all-encompassing and will likewise lead to the rearrangement of accepted cosmology as said cosmology relates to each individual "universe."

*Note on reading and interpretation: statements in **bold!** print (hereafter) are "shots!," of which there are 8; text immediately following each shot! is "Shrapnel" and serves to illuminate the basic nature of the shot! from which it springs. Shrapnel is malleable and may be shaped/added to as the move is made toward the confrontation and as the obligatory and necessary debate between Uzis! and anti-Uzis!, i.e., tools, occurs. Shots!, however, are non-negotiable; though chronologically and conceptually later than the concepts elucidated by shrapnel, they are textually earlier, and like calcium-enriched concrete in the bleak starkness of winter, were quickly hardened and came to embody the *concepts* of shrapnel and prospects not yet explored therein. Furthermore, shots!, unlike shrapnel, may be used for a) hasty Uzi! proselytizing [sic?] on busy asphalt streets, b) rallying angry masses when combined with spittle and raised, clutched fists, and c) tee-shirt slogans and other marketable items (keychains, bumper stickers, souvenir cups, etc.).

whoomph dey it is...

1-Shot!-**Level of experience and the intricate simplicity of ideas are greater than or equal to (≥) established age/class dichotomies.**

Self-explanatory. What one has done is valuable insofar as the experience has been processed; simple ideas are the most intricate, and the most intricate ideas are the simplest if, but only if, they are. Age/class? Maya Angelou is old and her poetry is much worse than Bukowski's, who is old too, but whose experiences are better processed in his work than are Angelou's in hers. If Bukowski were fifty years older than Angelou and his experiences were not processed as well as hers, she would be the better poet (if they were both writing poetry which they claimed was based only on experience (rather than art for art's sake (although this idea clearly falls into the category of unprocessed, and as stated concurrently, is therefore useless))). Sam Walton is rich but dead.

2-Shot!-**Thoughts and tongues must be unbound! which leads directly to the new**

aesthetic: return of clit and balls to art (life).

We are currently operating under a repressive system of self-censorship. We talk about our mothers but no one else does; this leaves us without alternate concepts of our mother. What was the purpose of de Sade or Nin or Miller or them wacky beats or Rhett Butler or Guccione...we will not turn back and reclasp the shackles on different (metaphorical) feet. We cannot pander to public opinion, and in fact must destroy such constructions. If the masses don't care for the effusions, they can take it up in the Op-ed pages. You can say think write hoot hollar "whatever the fuck you want" (says J). To allow for and promote this old respected but forgotten concept, the new aesthetic must be employed. The "return of clit and balls to art (life)" does not mean that art or life (or life or art (which are in the final analysis identical)) must contain explicit material; rather, it means that such material should be an option. Some material may no doubt be offensive, and responsibility should be kept quick in the holster, but it should also be noted that something is offensive to everyone and everything is offensive to someone. If for nothing else, what is deemed offensive should be allowed, even promoted (at least in underground circles (we are not calling for the inclusion of the new aesthetic on cartoons, but among mature thinking beings)) so as to document what was once considered offensive. What is deemed offensive is undoubtedly offensive, inarguably so, but it is also inarguably inoffensive, or acceptable (see **8-Shot!**)

3-Shot!- **"Kill yr idols," i.e., annihilate the cult of the celebrity.**

For instance, SY uttered the above quoted statement, but we do not idolize them; rather, we respect the concept. There is a difference, of course (see C's Analects). If Alyssa [?] Milano said something would you write it down and worship it and live by it and ask for her autograph? How about Martin Amis? Maybe write down the statements of either of the two for reference, but not live by, and certainly don't ask for autographs (first editions may be autographed but only for the subsequent increase in market value (we **Uzis!** are, unfortunately, products of our class (though we breaking them chains))). It is still acceptable to respect well-meaning parents, or good parents, or good people, or good literature, or good ideas. *Teen Beat* be gone.

4-Shot!-**K.Y.E.O.**

shhh. keep your eyes open. KEEP YOUR EYES OPEN. For? For tools. Tools= **anti-Uzis!**= tools. You can tell a tool by their pheromones, or their pheneromes, Both are indications of the **anti-Uzi!** and can be crushed by successfully placed shots. shhh. keep your eyes open.

5-Shot!- **MTV must be destroyed!**

Most obvious of the shots to follow from all other shots (although we still see this is only as it *seems*), it is also the point at which you the viewer can most easily take action. This is not a haphazard choice of an enemy just for that purpose. We would all be fools to think that Eric Neis was not hand-picked to represent your ideals. While it is true Music Television is not alone in the effort to put down all revolutions like Darth Vadar they are the most powerful threat by virtue of the simultaneity of the apparent position of creator and insider of culcha.

6-Shot!-**Dismiss Newtonian physics/embrace chaotic systems.**

While Newtonian physics is fine for approximations, this is no longer a time for approximations. WE can no longer take error as error. The weather can never be predicted and would you have suspected this. It has been proven beyond a doubt that butterflies have created more havoc than us. The point being that infinite scales are infinitely transmutable and more or less there for you to transmute. It is time to get your shit together.

7-Shot!-**most things are grey**
most things are gray

colour. color. water closet. toilet. fag. cigar. None of these is the end all. How can you be sure? Epistemological concerns are central to all ontological ones. No signaling to a new

Skeptic era is to be interpreted. Nothing is being interpreted but what can be. This so-called grey/grayness of being is a mere fact of lingo—leading to the prospect that nothing is grey in the light of...

8-Shot!-**There is infinite objective truth.**

"Formal features do not exist independent of a being's experience," "not only will *it* prove something, *it* will prove anything," "the facts are there, but only as a consequence of the interpretive model that has called them into being" As it has surely been said a million times before this "Truth is in the eye of the beholder." This shot is non-negotiable.

If I can't be an Uzi! I don't want to be part of your revolution!

High Plains Drifter
Fall 1993

Infinite Objective Truth

Lily-Hayes Kaufman

Hustled

Lazy smoke floats through unbrushed curls
It's natural blond hair
(not bottle)
Hair that does not smell of
floral shampoos
But of cigars--
She's going to bank this one
Crack
Thunk
Ragged jean cutoffs ripped below
Back pockets
(sexy)
Fringes showcase long white stems
skinny legs
she's stripes
Fluorescent lighting makes cheekbones ghoulish
a red shirt that screams
Notice me,
I'm pretty
She used to wear bird sweaters
And drop her sandwich on the floor--
She was pretty then
Don't scratch
You sink the eight
And win
Thunk
She puts down her stick
Crack
And grabs her two packs of Marlboros
Bitch, she says
And gives you the finger

Alison Niebanck

Infinite Objective Truth, distorted

Lily-Hayes Kaufman

ACCEPTANCE...
has shined many shoes
with my tung oil
ACCEPTANCE
has summoned sugar voices
to ornate my wing span
ACCEPTANCE...
has depressed me to earth
to eat the ground ivy
where envy rest,
at its dead ends
SO GO INDI !
to the cemetery inside a keyhole
since what's behind door number # green
has left me outside
÷ divided by
playing memory against
my personality
defending my wallet size 2nd nature embryo
atop a pothole of balance
as laughing young yearsbicycle in the black
tung oil
and mock my current attempts
to BALANCE,
SO GO INDI !
since it wasn't me who said that
only 'children of the sundry'
would separate us
SO GO INDI !
while I bronze like metal tulips
and predict the water image
of our old age
through fishbowl gaze
at no photogenic moments
hanging around
to clutter my minds wall
SO GO INDI !
as our distance
REST...
on the moon tapestry
of my elephant dreams
SO GO INDI !
your dust won't leave off
your dust turns blue when you write,
your dust turns pain when you pause!
SO GO INDI...
###

'Blues

go...

but

~~become~~

home
before long'

Daniel A. Thomas
as
'Phoenix Balanque'

To be an Effective Agent you must

Sing dead songs as though you believe they are self-fulfilling prophecies,
Believe they are self-fulfilling prophecies,
Bury the past covers under pillows,
Take a few shots before the mission so you forget it and they can't even beat it out of you,
Stare at the enemy like they know everything you know,
Realize lit candles are beacon light towers that can lead you to the foe's inner zones, but never carry one yourself,
Eat flesh you can't digest even if it means you've got to cut yourself up later to get it out again,
Remember to blame the scars on women. When you say, "It was her razor claws," it will re-emphasize your cover,
Wear short hair and a large cowl so no one can aim for your brain,
Change your password regularly,
Claim insanity if your cover is blown (submitting to electroshock therapy will give credence),
Sever your open dream lines. Anything, at any distance, could connect and alter or receive your reports,
Don't use bait, be bait. You don't have control over anything else,
Keep clear files, but disguise them as toilet paper with shit already on it or as rolling paper,
Drive and walk just a bit faster,
Discreetly check for bugs in terra-cotta pots and on anyone foreign to you by feigning infatuation,
Never ask anyone, under any circumstances, especially if you think they are on your side, "Who are you an agent for?"

Josh May
fall 1992

Personal Statement: A Manifesto

I am sorry this is so late. I thank you for helping me on such short notice. As you might have guessed I am not fond of personal statements. I pretty much think that my writing should speak for itself, after all I won't always be there to speak for it. But I'll tell you what I do know:

I thought it was amusing that you called me a modernist because it was just days before that I had realized it myself and named the movement The New Modernism. This is probably taken already but that is part of The New Modernism anyway. The main cause of this movement is that I figured out I like totality. I don't think it is a totality like the one we think of in the Old Modernism. Well I think we thought of it wrong in the first place.

Most of the New Modernism comes from reading Gertrude Stein, Stevens, Beckett, and extensive conversations with our own very convincing Brian Selsky.

I decided if this movement doesn't work out the way I haven't planned really but have hoped for then I might switch to the New Romanticism. I think it is pretty much a change in name only, but to make it look more convincing I would start with Salinger, Kerouac and Genet. The New Romanticism seems sketchy, but I just thought of it Today, and I am certainly willing to give credit where credit is due: stand up Personism.

I don't follow any of this too carefully, due to the New Lack of Authority. Who needs it. I can paint some of Pollock's best works, roll die for some of Cage's best poems and scores, who would know. Not me for certain, and I don't want to—what would that prove.

So what do I want to do. I want to keep on doing whatever it is I am doing now. I think I called it New Acting or New Writing but I'm not sure if that's what I called it or if someone else did and no matter who did if they did I am doing it. I just want to fool enough into thinking there is a right and that I got it right for long enough to live for two or three years without having to worry about it myself.

Josh May
Spring 1996

If That Reddest Hour You in Your Sleep and Me in Mine

Maybe I had known you up.

I will write you a story because it has been too long. Stories on the porch; about porches=the conversation. Now the stories are illicit, or at least bigger, but there is something for the whispered work, the stolen (hidden) kiss. A return to the realm of supposed privacy. (From *The Chronicle:* "I wouldn't write anything over email that I wouldn't say in a room full of 300 people.") The conversation is dice to the game, blue ink across my leg, mark you up. We only know each other with stories.

1) (without having moved): There are fewer leaves to rake in my new yard."
2) "From my window I can see everything I want to."
3) "What I'm after is complete self-effacement." (in *Jason,* student/teacher relationships)
4)"I won't say I wasn't jealous." (in *Latin,* watching undergrads make love in the stacks)

Reasons not to write: A story is not an argument. A story can be used as proof, or may be admissable in this court. The trial is a tired metaphor. (Another reason not to write) You could be wrong (Josh asks why I would dream to negate the concept of "truth")

I said to her: I read Richard Bach. I believed *Illusions.* You asked what happens when you get everything you want, but I want to know what happens when who you were meant for was meant for someone else (only one person in the world would panic at this sentence but that is the person it is for (test for witches))

In *Broadcast News*: the question is between the dusty American dream and even dustier notions of aristocracy. William Hurt is the aristocracy (=success without work). Albert Brooks is America (= the Jew relegated in incremental steps and fantastically bad luck). Says William Hurt: "What do you do when your real life exceeds your wildest dreams?"
Brooks: "Keep it to yourself."

Consistency is fool's gold, a cage, a mermaid with no death wish. (if you stay in my arms)

Television theory posits flow as the modulator for viewing behaviors. I think me in flow. TV wants you to get on at 6 and stay the whole evening." We talk of drag: the point of *The Crying Game* as opposed to *Tootsie* or *Priscilla* is that you as audience are fooled, not just the pathetic diegetic audience. Where is the conversation now?

Nabokov writes that *Lolita* was the record of his love affair with the English language:

My private tragedy, which cannot, and indeed should not, be anybody's concern, is that I had to abandon my natural idiom, my untrammeled, rich, infinitely docile Russian tongue for a second-rate brand of English, devoid of any of those apparatuses—the baffling mirror, the black velvet backdrop, the implied associations and traditions—which the native illusionist, frac-tails flying, can magically use to transcend the heritage in his own way.

he wrote: "Lolita, this may be neither here nor there but I have to say it."

In this conversation you are a footnote to an earlier work. Alice-like, I want to magnify, to make "want" a contraction. Wan't. But you can't have a story without a story. I have a bag full of five rhetorical tricks and I will use each one fully. As BG says (also stolen): Your front is your back.

"We were doling out superpowers. (The important thing here is to see your life in terms of a story. To have the impudence.) Here I quote from a shorter work:

Your superpower is that you're always
reinvented as a mystery. His superpower
is to appear *utterly ordinary*. My superpower

"Tay had sworn off waffle-os so we were attempting to shape holiday rice crispy treats into multi-cultural snowflake shapes, but you try making snowflakes out of sticky gravely crumb-like particles. Needless to say, none of us were too intrigued by the immanent weeks of winter celebration. Orgon had this theory that love, while the opiate of the masses that (much like football) medicated us up so much that we forgot to ask the "important" questions, still had a utopian kernel of miracle to it (an idea he stole from Jameson's essay on *Jaws*). As we set about to write detailed love histories (admittedly with skepticism) I saw that it was already clear that love instances were distinguishable but ultimately parallel. You may ask if the most important tenet of the PMC is a short attention span, and you would write to do so. Master of disguise, that was the missing superpower."

Avatar created his own sad computer world; it was the best I had seen. Allie Light said that madness is often merely the manifestation of sane behavior-strategies in mad situations. You have already forgotten the conversation of Tay and Orgon.

My dance teacher set us straight: With blues, you keep something for yourself.

We talk about coded language (for us as well as Nabokov, English is coded—I defy you native speaker) and we know that it is not race/gender/sexuality/class which divide the world but rather dialect. A conversation, as far back as Plato, starts with agreeing on terms. Discourse is a conversation with only one non-neogtiable end-point. Your hand is a conversation whose terms we have not yet defined.

What you don't want to say is that you made me feel lonely, both then and now (here nor there) but lonely the way something attractive and addictive can make me feel, like MTV. You can say "you've got me" to the moon but I doubt that it will have you either. Apathy is the nectar of the gods. In the greater-Durham farm area there is a place called Infinity Road.

A letter is always like a letter in its beginning and ends. At Krista's apartment I found a poem I had given her 7 years ago. It said: love is too real for words. Today I could say a lot about the misuse of terms in that statement, but I would still mean it. Without sadness, there my name is. They call it voice.

a conversation is five parts, because there are five fingers on a hand. A kiss may be a cigar. you can only tell a story from inside a story, thus proving the inside of an inside theory. you will say you are tired, and that you can't translate, and that's when i'll say you're in the right place.

aurochs and angels, plastic barbie shoes—the aesthetics of the list. the list implies hierarchy in space, the genealogy implies hierarchy over time. only metonymy can house love.

someone said of me once: she's nice, but always so distracted.

Leila Easa
Fall 1995

This is Not a Street

Heather Seybolt
spring 1997

Baby Born Outside of Macedonia

The boy yells from the hill
of the waving grasses—
Mother, we are here.
Just a little farther.
He turns to see her,
kneeling as if in prayer,
cupping her belly like a holy grail.
She is coming from where I was,
the boy realizes. *She should stay*
where she is, where she will not be hungry.

They are leaving home because it is time
for the waters to break and flood
as people who want to live cross a border
between what is holy and what can be made holy.

Her water, the tears come
-in the sculpting of one woman
within another
-in the knowledge she cannot go back
to the same place ever again.

As her daughter's battle cry
sweeps over the whispering field,
the mother caresses the child's eyes clean.
Bent over in what she has just created
in a land she does not call her own,
the woman closes her hollowed eyes,
losing all grief for the moment
because pain has no translation here.

My daughter will not carry my anger.
I will carry her into another country
whose language has a name for rebirth
that we will learn together.

Lisa Rying

Offer

If
you could hunger the iron immensity
of the night
still untouched,
if you could hunger the iron up,
if the field your heart
hadn't sealed
to burning mist, hadn't grown only hollow fruit
hollowing you,
if the deep machine showed itself
into the wires the birds
and the life follow
into the whiteness,
and if that whiteness survived, untouched
the footsteps, the deep hoof-prints—
if Love, I shined with wires— untouched
the journey,
if my journeys were clothes I could step from
if my journeys were only the places I've been,
if my faces were clay,
if my throat broadened into the hollow of a tree,
if the world was a narrow room with a legged door
and a countryside
I would walk,
I would add myself to the fiery paths,
I would add myself to dust:

I would make you a new countryside from me
I would remake you in the country of bones.

Jerry A. Dowless
Fall 1991

Lemons

Bl a urring t,hey

see m to be c au s
lieve ,

, le mons and potatoes)

my ton p gue shoul-

d leaf., and the hy perbol c
draulic

shrill of lemons

in potatoes--,

they c once n ra
an't concentrate on m e
y

ear., ,le m o ns
ctric potatoes and potatoes, lemons

and pot atoes
ential lemons

,pu r
pi.ls stut-

ter into fire

flies --the way light

hears blood, or

bloom . A rabble of lemons

typed into

potatoes

James Sanders
spring 1996

Model 1 *n.*

representation in three dimensions of existing person or thing or of proposed structure, esp. on smaller scale; simplified description of system etc.; design or style of structure, esp. of motor vehicle; person or thing proposed for imitation; person employed to pose for an artist, or to display clothes etc. by wearing them; (copy of) garment etc. by well-known designer. **2** *a.* exemplary, ideally perfect **3** *v.* fashion or shape (figure) in clay, wax, etc.; form (thing) *after* or *(up)on* model; (of person acting as model) display (garment).

you had your hips cocked
and haughty before the camera flash,
smiling for consumers
through a mask of brand-name cosmetics
brushed over a beautiful version of my face.
you were my age then
and already a success at it,
posed innocent and contained
in the colored pages of magazines.
little girls fingered your lacqueredflat face
and dreamed
of pulling it on over their own.

though ten years and two children bloated you
beyond that slender, arrogant girl,
she died only in order
to haunt—appearing in mirrors
for a moment, taunting in and out of shadows.
at least you had one daughter, then

to dress and style like a tiny mannequin

as if she would inherit your own desire
for the ease that comes with apathy,
a person paid for years to style your
hair arrange your limbs the expressions
on your faces

(the small details
and chores of life
were the ones that sent you
into your rages or
your silences

and drove you away from your
own home, at eighteen
to find the people who would let you
trade your body for a set
of explicit instructions and fame)

I look at you
at the bottom of my drawer unhung
and think,
I never wanted to be her
lying still and flat and framed

a frozen face shrouded
by a plate of glass,
the pane unclouded by breath.

Courtney Queeney

Portrait

Gwendolyn Kerschbaumer
Spring 1998

Outside the Structure

Lily-Hayes Kaufman

Ritual

if we were braver we would tear
the hair from our scalps
crumple our bodies
across your pale pine box

instead we clutch at grass
by the funeral home steps
pulling up moist green threads
black soil clinging to moon-white roots
drop them limp
and stand back up

if we had the hearts of our ancestors
we would wail out
raw-throated
rip wounds into our clothing

instead we straighten lips
let tears slip in thin streams
from eye to jaw

and wonder what
ritual
you want from us

Laura Podolsky

St/æ/uff:
Disacknowledgements∂

*by The Catachreses*Σ

telling, not/ showing
souls, especially those which are: burning, captured, lacerated, naked, scarred, and *mine*
((pseudonyms)))
dazzling✷ sparkling★ glittering☆ gleaming✳ shimmering✪ shining

endless pointless redundant repetition
endless pointless redundant repetition
"e t e r n a l"

droppin ⅁
g

Forced rhyme/
Anytime/
Yes, we mind/
It's not sublime/
rainbowsbutterfliesbubblegumfairytaleslittleheartsandstars
redos soder redos soder redos soder

rat race
≠
Fragments not equalling sentences.
"really good epigraphs" with really bad poems
stars spooning "fire"y "red"heads total awe
you're misuse of homonyms
every breathe you take
Extraneous Capitalization To Convey **IMPORTANCE**
Papa John's 2 1/2 hours later
graduation photos

MACINTOSH
whoever drank the last Diet Mountain Dew or ate the last Swedish Fish
obsolete otofoto ∏
poems/ which are short because/ they have nothing to say

being imprisoned as 1: scientific ex
periments 2: puppies waiting 3: to be sold
Big Brother
:signing in and out

disk error #-36
The Diet Coke people— where is the 1.5L size?
Invoking The Abstract...
Quoting "REALLY" important words

bad phallic imagery re: (frustrated sexual references

"simultaenousness"

spel cheque

iiiiii
i
i
i
iiiiii

friends friends friends *amigos* friends friends friends

it's a tragedy
when form poetry is used
very horribly

UWC 5 Section 76 Paper #1 Rhectoric
:From The Ancient Greeks To Us ©

¿random, punctuation?

This is just to sayπ
we find∫ superfluous❻ allusion❼
oh so irritating
and so unnecessary❽

Is this Reality? Is this a Dream? …

…
…
…
…
…
…
……
……

NOTES
∂ ☜
∑…
∏See the 1997compendium of recent advances ⊗T⊗PH⊗T⊗
π Wm. Carlos Williams, note left on fridge
∫ Herman Melville, *Moby Dick*
❻James Joyce, *Ulysses*
❼Oliver Wendell Holmes, John Greenleaf Whittier, Henry David Thoreau, Ralph Waldo Emerson
❽Sharon Crowley, *ARCS*

Enkindling: *Entartete Kunst*

They will tell us
what to see
    which cheek the brush
    may hollow out
the way the world works
and how many fingers
may be held against the dike
to stop the ribs
from bleeding out stars
    and barbed bars
and triangulated hearts

All this can be taken from us
    with each successive breath
        it goes
and we cannot dance the sunset back
They bleed the world of color
    stroke by stroke
        the shriek of wheels
against a rail
in darkness
    sweet symmetry
of box shut up
against the light

This is what we rail against (cold
fury—white and blue)
the way we bear desire
in deep ochre and maroon
    the gaunt bow of body against the tree
    the cacophony of brilliant ache
    the empty eyes of the destroyed
        places pastel-fleshed
    the stark black line of embrace
and the brush like knife
across the canvass letting
    the hungry world
bleed through

and into being

The world is shattered
and the pieces ill-placed
  upon repair
refract sense into sensation
and concentrate real into abstract
The shards of conception
and creation litter the dark streets
When the obscure moon emerges
  and pales the earth over
the old light glimmers jaggedly
(the sky is
falling)
and we know
Kristallnacht is come

Finally
they are come
with the solution
to the degeneration
and all the awful beauty
will not save us from
the order of things
or the implication that the mind
can be made mute
and only the body rendered incendiary

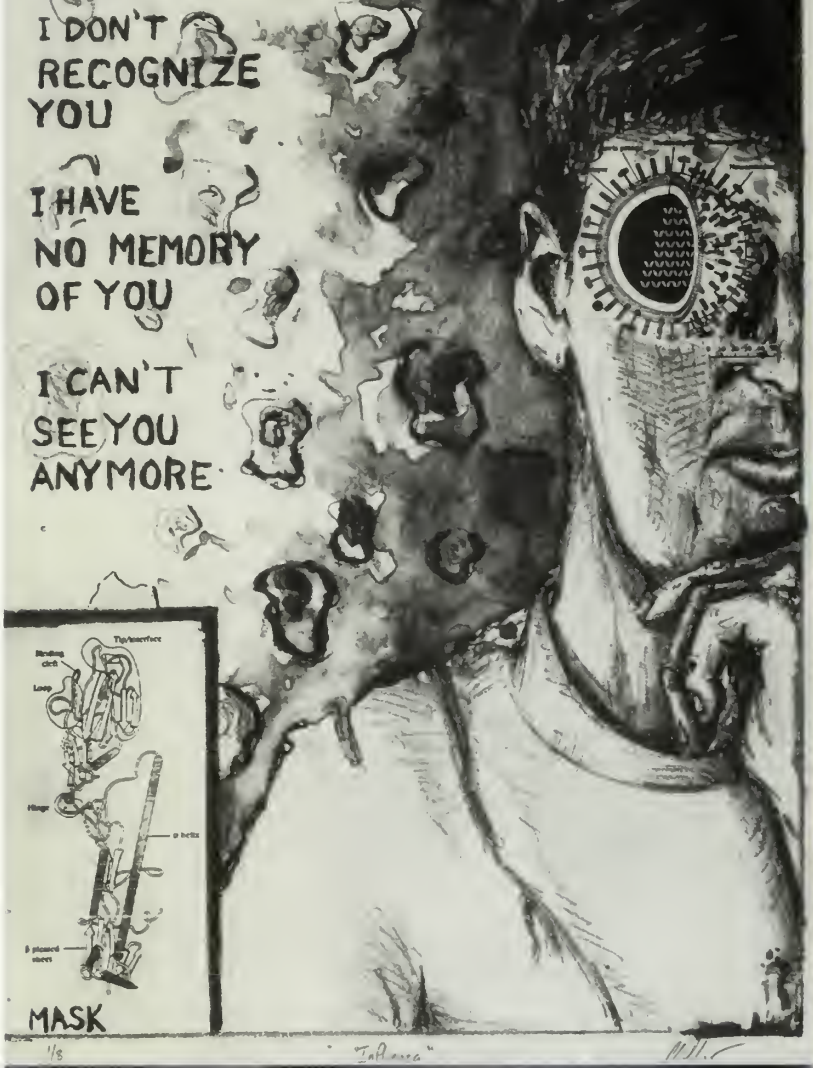
wir vebrennen
we burn

Alexis Blane

Editor's Note:
Entartete Kunst: *Degenerate Art.* During the Nazi regime Hitler rounded up all the art he termed "Degenerate" including the work of most of the great German expressionists and exhibited it as evidence of the social and moral ills that plagued Germany-- and for which his Reich was the answer.

Apoptosis

Andrew Snow
Spring 1999


I DON'T RECOGNIZE YOU
I HAVE NO MEMORY OF YOU
I CAN'T SEE YOU ANYMORE
MASK

the archive

Spring 2000
Volume 112 No. 2

the archive

spring 2000

volume 112

number 2

the archive

spring 2000

volume 112

number 2

Paradoxes and Oxymorons

This poem is concerned with language on a very plain level.
Look at it talking to you. You look out a window
Or pretend to fidget. You have it but you don't have it.
You miss it, it misses you. You miss each other.

The poem is sad because it wants to be yours, and cannot.
What's a plain level? It is that and other things,
Bringing a system of them into play. Play?
Well, actually, yes, but I consider play to be

A deeper outside thing, a dreamed role-pattern,
As in the division of grace these long August days
Without proof. Open-ended. And before you know
It gets lost in the steam and chatter of typewriters.

It has been played once more. I think you exist only
To tease me into doing it, on your level, and then you aren't there
Or have adopted a different attitude. And the poem
Has set me softly down beside you. The poem is you.

John Ashbery

© 1981 by John Ashbery. Reprinted by permission of Georges Borchardt, Inc.

Rising Above
Jesica Snow

the archive

spring 2000
volume 112, number 2

Staff

Editor: Courtney Queeney
Jennie Berkesch
Hillary Berliner
Alexis Blane
Allen Loeb
Kate McCutcheon
Kelly Lynn Mulvey
Bess Newman

Special Thanks

Beverly Meek
Moli Jones and the Publishing Place
Prateeti Khazani
Janet Dickerson
Campus Council
University Writing Program
The John Spencer Bassett Fund
President Keohane
The Office of Intercultural Affairs

The Archive is published by Undergraduate Publications at Duke University, North Carolina. The editorial staff will not consider work that has been submitted concurrently to another campus publication. Authorial anonymity is observed throughout the review process. Correspondence should be directed to Undergraduate Publications at 101-3 Bryan Center, Duke University, Durham, NC 27708.

Prayer Tablets at a Shinto Shrine

Kelly Grant

table of contents

poetry and prose

Paradoxes and Oxymorons.....*John Ashbery*.....5

section one: language on a plain level

Redemption of Stones.....*Phillip Woodhall*.....10
Blue-Black Night.....*Lee Bullock*.....11
The bleeding midget monkey man.....*Daniel Adrian Thomas*.....12
we all scream for ice cream.....*Brooke Campbell*.....15
Writer's Block.....*Kelly Lynn Mulvey*.....16

section two: you miss it, it misses you

Poem for you from a night train.....*Josh Partlow*.....20
Awoke.....*Jonas Blank*.....21
suicide blonde.....*Brooke Campbell*.....22
Two Different Things.....*Anne-Marie Newton*.....23
looking glass.....*Brooke Campbell*.....26
Recurring.....*Hillary Berliner*.....27
Leavetaking or 12th Birthday Letter (unsent).....*Alexis Blane*.....28
He will bring them home.....*Courtney Queeney*.....30
butterfly soldier.....*Mara Jebsen*.....32

section three: the division of grace

How the Children Got Rid of Their Mother.....*Alison Niebanck*.....36
Under-wing.....*Lisa Rying*.....38
The Timing of the Matter.....*Michael Gause*.....40
My Gaza.....*Laila El-Haddad*.....46
What is Buried?.....*Emily Gates*.....47
This is The Place.....*Laura Podolsky*.....49

section four: ...and then you aren't there

give us this day.....*Courtney Queeney*.....54
sitting dreaming drinking tea.....*A.M. Gluvna*.....55
lessons.....*Jennie Berkesch*.....56
numb.....*Jennie Berkesch*.....57
Residue.....*Jen McDonald*.....58
my father brings home light.....*Courtney Queeney*.....60
Salome.....*Alexis Blane*.....62

art and photography

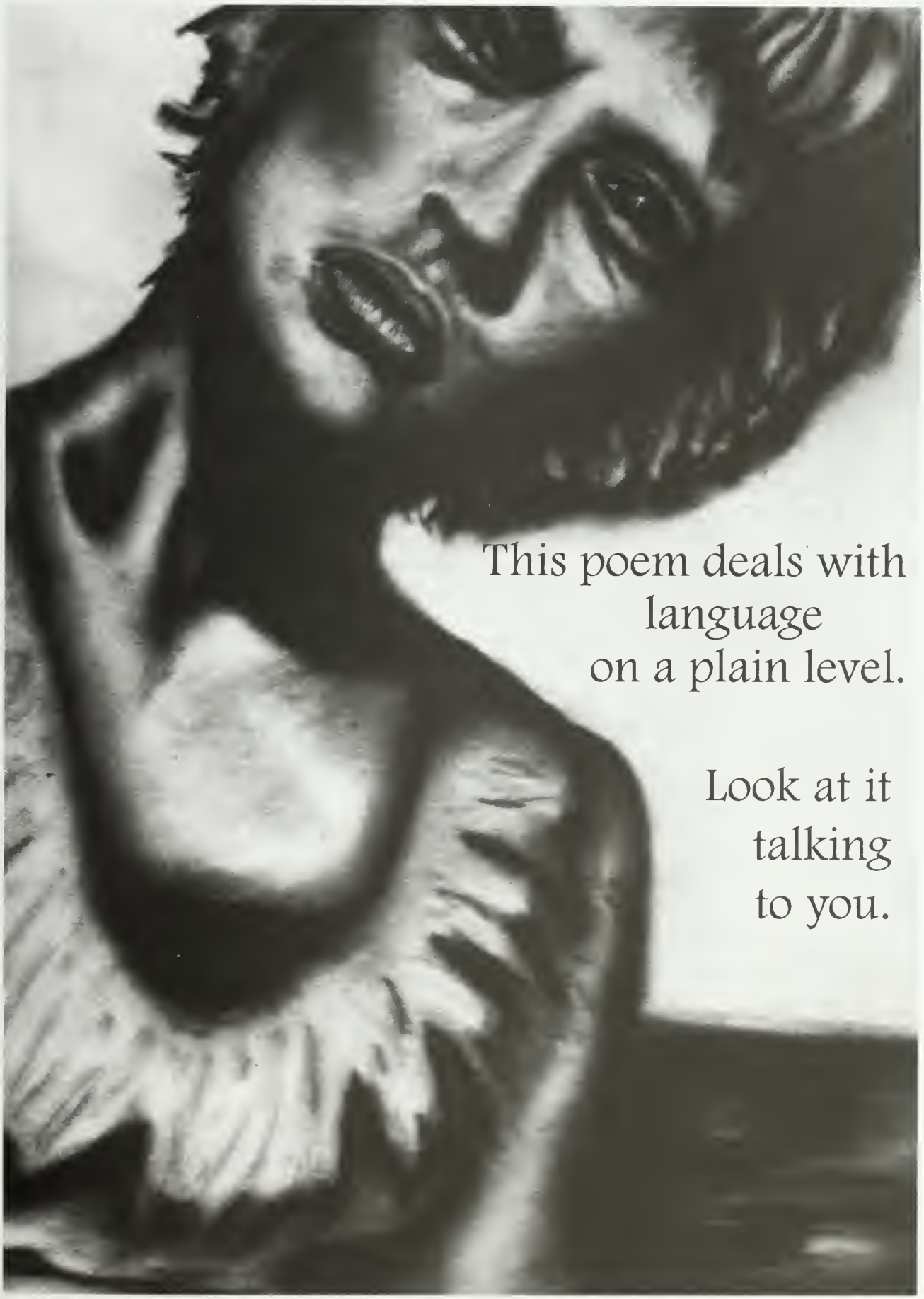
Rising Above.....*Jessica Snow*.....cover
Prayer Tablets at a Shinto Shrine .....*Kelly Grant*.....5
Intensity.....*Jacky Myint*.....8
untitled.....*Stephanie Schumann*.....11
Solitude.....*Todd Cignetti*.....15
untitled.....*Jeri Netter*.....17
Before Ambivalence.....*Jessica Snow*.....19
On Edge.....*Jacky Myint*.....21
untitled.....*Jeri Netter*.....22
Old Timer.....*Todd Cignetti*.....27
Glacier Grey, Chilean Patagonia.....*Alex Fattal*.....31
Lily pads.....*Stephanie Schumann*.....33
Atacama.....*Alex Fattal*.....34
Prayer Offerings.....*Kelly Grant*.....35
Archway at Pashupati.....*Stephanie Schumann*.....37
Post-Apocalyptic Backyard Picnic.....*Todd Cignetti*.....45
untitled.....*Alex Fattal*.....46
Room With a View.....*Jason Nichols*.....53
untitled.....*Todd Cignetti*.....57

Queen of Computers.....*C.Q.*
Fountain of Knowledge.....*A.B.*
Priestess of Angst.....*J.B.*
Bearer of the Binder.....*B.N.*
Spoiled Kid.....*A.L.*
Bad Thing.....*H.S.*

Disacknowledgements:

OIT Solutions
Noun of Abstract
Otophoto
Machintoshes
The Ball'n'Chain
The Beaded Bag
H.C.
The meaning of life
The mammal song
Boy Bands (except 'NSYNC)
Bench poems
Talking livestock
Improperly used ellipses
Telling, not showing
One-dimensional, stereotypical figures
Sweeping statements about art
Self-righteousness
sleep=death=sleep
Toe-heads
Putrid Refrigerator
Non-recognizable disks
Diet Pepsi
Papa John's
Lack of useful office supplies
Wax pencils
Everyone who has turned the lights out on us

I. language on a plain level



Intensity

Jacky Myint

Redemption of Stones

Twelve hundred degrees:
Their hot eyes brighten
Crusher's maw their memory,
Ripped from the mountain
As shrikes haul
Dragonflies from air.

Eighteen hundred:
All ghosts
Escape who can.
Heat like guilt
Penetrates stones
Stunned of color.

Two thousand degrees:
Why this second burning
Interrogation by fire
Unbidden pyroclastic
Summing up?

Cone ten. At two-three-five-oh
Flint flickers
White as Jesus rising.
Burners drone
Doxologies to flame.

Three days later
We roll back the door
Discover who was saved.

Phillip Woodhall

untitled

Stephanie Schumann

Blue-Black Night

Lee Bullock

The blue-black hovers,
wraps around the out-stretched, crying arms of Mother Oak,
who stands gnarled and luscious
to rock the indigo in the crook of her arm.
The cool lengthens,
a net to seize
the scattered
tree
if she loses her hold.

The bleeding midget monkey man

Innocence chatter of fetus calligraphy
draw rosepedals around his primal name
the way it was originally spit
by mommies bottom lips
when...
their brotherhood
in mellow ripe moment
secludes a brilliant luster

2 cut wrist
in the major
Valentine color

there's blood at his doorstep as
rosepedals weep
when forearms clap
into 1
sacred as lonely Russian violins

blood scats down 2
4 arms
in new world tempo
see congo colors
in stern chase of grace

"Does anyone know where the battlefield is ?
I'm new to the area of my other !"
Gutgestures continue to papercut these
hard roads to the question

in response
rosepedals still weep
from these tired excuses

long enough to form yaaawn lilies
to tie up the pale horse stable
and concentrate on the person
so that's what he did!

the Bleeding Midget Monkey Man was
traveling in décor of his own land
along 2 blood rivers
in the image of Narcissus
where he may never again awake

still his statue would have a name tag
viewed upon a scarred head moth graffiti wall
preserved by time's dry humor

his travel had begun
his spin - spun
incision after decision
in a six minute trip from mind to sun
before his blood became fresh air

freeing acceptant speeches from his eternal affairs
from stonestare
empty glares went wasteland &
quissyexotic eyes to the resting place
no matter his animal sex

pre-Columbian chants & warm slang fluid
no longer hold conversations made up of good-byes
they sleepwrite over signature sounds now

the Bleeding Midget Monkey Man
was a siamese life disease
clothed in sacrificial scarf's
the latest
fashion at the labor yard

where he was busy renovating brotherhood
into manifest buildings
layered munitions
connecting conscience with experience

Mexican architects
play cards
with sex stars as
perversion teachers of planets
with running heart perfume
caressing foreign language
of visiting dream family
to never expect a visit is when nightmares occur

so he high-minded
his vegetables
not knowing who walked before him

the bleeding midget monkey man's
travel had begun
his spin - spun
incision after decision
in a six minute trip from mind to sun
before his blood became fresh air

innocence chatter of fetus calligraphy
draw rosepedals around his primal name
the way it was originally spit
by mommies bottom lips

old friend Venus
underwrites his born papers

old Friend Venus
tips his hat to seasons changed

they met at yester
the disappearing day of winter
the 180° point of his joint venture

where war frozen silverware
skeleton as human parody

and afar from his foot rags
ice compass in stance
not for weather's comfort
but for
budding growth
in death's temperature

the Bleeding Midget Monkey Man's
travel had begun!

Daniel Adrian Thomas

Solitude

Todd Cignetti

we all scream for ice cream

today I can't remember
whether I ate strawberry ice cream
to rid the taste of semen
or because it was my favorite flavor
of the three he offered
I remember his smells
(beer, sweat, and semen)—
but I can't remember his taste—
only strawberry,
strawberry every week,
sometimes twice a week
(if I was a really good girl)

Brooke Campbell

Writer's Block

Kelly Lynn Mulvey

It's all there
with red page numbers
(remember to cite)
telling you to make it real
to draw it out...
and suckemin.

46 pages of writing about writing
and not one emotion
and not one thought.

Like a train cut through a ghost town
I smooth the pages down
with my fingers
and watch the empty word-skeletons
dancing with the one lone dog
who still hovers near the station,
skin pulled tight on hollow ribs

and roll over to sleep with my
heavy warm block again
and again
and again.
(repetition emphasizes important
words,
page 32).

It's that dog that keeps me going
i curl up in his hollow bones
and wash myself clean
in sewage emptiness.

page 21 says do not get lost
in your thoughts.

my thoughts are lost in me
in hollow bones
i suckemin.

Untitled

Jeri Netter

II. you miss it, it misses you

You have it

but you don't have it.

You miss it,

it misses you.

You miss each other.

Before Ambivalence

Jessica Snow

Poem for you from a night train

Mine is a murmuring darkness.
It is settling down, pooling in the valleys I slip through,
rolling off the hills I tunnel through.
I can make out only a shadowed suggestion of the landscape I pass
and less of what's ahead.

Yours, I imagine, is charged brighter--
darting taxi eyes, live neon signs, and higher--
out of, say the 35th slice of steel or stone,
the lonely lights of the writers.

I am awake.
You surround me fiercely tonight
with a blazing multi-pistol hold-up.
On my skin I smell your bottomless softness,
tongue taste your tenderests.
In the glass, I reflect on your eyes in my reflection,
how did you get there? when did you slide in so solidly?
You have made me, you made me new, electric eyes.

You are awake.
I follow your magnetic movements--
how you pass through moving hours, forgotten minutes.
You perform for me physical feats,
some Einstein watching watches or dropping balls from these dark hills,
could not explain why in my compartment space has expanded, time bent to a halt,
matter created, future brightened.

We are awake.
We are the tracks
winding over the world in parallel
lines, smooth joined lines.
We are the trains,
fierce face lights searching for each other
horns sounding loud signals, moans, over our ruins, our nameless towns,
squeezing the darkness from between us.

I am awake.
I am awake because you are awake
because we are getting closer.

Josh Partlow

On Edge

Jacky Myint

Awoke

Curled
in my naked arms
you seem light
and I wonder
if you were ever here
wispy countenance reading
nothing
like an empty vase.

Jonas Blank

suicide blonde

I needed a change, and I needed it fast
I needed to be someone else, anyone
but the one you left
I thought I wanted to die
but much too afraid I'd survive
I decided to dye
trouble is, black doesn't dye blonde
so I turned to bleach
two weeks later the black came back
though you never did

Brooke Campbell

untitled

Jeri Netter

Two Different Things

The lawnmower is so loud that you don't know she's there until she is running alongside you, trying to keep up. She shouts something to you, but you only see her lips move, you can't hear. As you bend to turn the mower off, you see that over her nightgown she wears an old sweatshirt of yours, one that you've had since high school. You turn the knob. The motor sputters and dies.

"Paul?" she says. "What are you doing?"

"What does it look like?" you ask her. The words come out wrong, you don't mean to sound like that. "I'm mowing the lawn."

"At three a.m.? You're mowing the lawn at three in the morning?"

"I don't see you doing it," you say, and again you want to take it back.

She wraps the sweatshirt tighter around herself, puts her palm against her forehead. "Paul," she says. Her pale blue nightgown is almost white in the dark. "Are you out of your mind?"

You stand there, looking at her, thinking about what she said. Out of your mind. That's exactly it. You are out, out of your mind, like being out of the house, out of the war, out of Vietnam. Somehow, in the confusion of being discharged, of going back into your real life, you left your mind on the outskirts, beyond the lines of home. It was just your body that got off the plane. It was just your body that made it home. Your mind is still out there somewhere, maybe in the jungle, maybe in that bar in Saigon, maybe it fell out somewhere over the Pacific. It makes sense, it really does.

"I'm—" you begin, but she doesn't understand. She's got her arms crossed over her chest—this is not supposed to anger her. She doesn't realize that you just want to do something for her. You want to get back in. You'd give anything just to fix her hairdryer, clean the drainpipes, paint the house, put up a swing. Anything, you'd give anything. But she's just standing there, ready to spit nails. And your mind is out, so you can't explain, nothing forms.

"Why?" she asks you, but you're out too far to know the question. "Answer me," she insists.

"What?" you say. "What is it?"

"What do you mean, what? Why do you do this? Why do you come here to bother me? Haven't I done enough? My God, I waited for you through two tours. I took care of everything so that you could come home and things would be okay. I made sure that the house was the same, I kept everything going. I washed your car. I painted the fence. I did all of that, and you're the one that left four months after you got back. So why do you come around? Are you trying to rub it in my face?"

You just look at her. Your mouth moves, but nothing comes out.

Shivering and furious, she folds her arms over her chest. "Why are you staring at me like that? What did I ever do? Why are you here—why now? Why do you do this?"

"It's not me," you want to say to her. You didn't want to go, but how can you explain to her that sometimes the grocery store becomes the jungle? You go in, you walk up empty aisles, you avoid the women with their downcast eyes. How can you explain that the rows upon rows of cans become forest, the shelves form a canopy over your head, fluorescent light becomes a dim ray stretching through high trees? How could she ever see that sometimes the parking lot turns into a clearing, grass replacing tar? How do you explain the voices of housewives become the wailing of an old man with a face like dried tobacco leaves? These nightmares happen when you are awake. They follow you through the day. They come in, you go out. They took over, gave you no choice but to move to the guest room, to the loft above the garage, to the apartment across town. Farther and farther out. You want to tell her you love her, even if you are out of your mind, but what you want and what you do are two different things.

You take your jacket off, give it to her. "Here," you say. "Wear this, it's cold."

"Get that fucking thing away from me!" She bats at it with an open hand.

You withdraw, put the jacket back on, and it settles like an arm across your shoulders. She doesn't understand how warm it can be. She doesn't realize that it keeps the heat in.

"Why do you wear it?" she asks you. "The war is over, Paul. You're home. Why do you wear it?"

You shrug, not knowing how to tell her that it's cold here. The air is thin and high and you struggle to breathe. There is a space in your lungs that never seems to fill, you are weightless, unable to keep the soles of your feet in contact with the ground. There is nothing in you. You haven't put your feet on the floor since you stepped off the plane. You float through days, weeks, decaying, rotting, a stench forming around you so that women in the grocery store shield their children from you. The jacket hides your swollen arms and chest. It holds your body in. Without it, there would be nothing left of you. It's too easy to disappear. The jacket holds you in.

"Answer me," she says. If there were something to say, you'd say it. "Why do you still wear

that thing? It's dirty, there's blood on it—why? There's no shrapnel flying around here. You don't need it. For God's sake, just take it off."

You don't move. She grabs your collar, tries to tug the jacket off your shoulder. You clench your arms to your sides, and she pulls harder. "Take it off," she hisses in the dark. "Take the fucking thing off."

You shrug a little, and then she is wild, flying at you, her hair getting tangled between the both of you. "Take it off!" She clutches at the jacket, trying to tear it from you, rip it apart, shred it with her fingernails. You stumble back, the weight of her throwing you off balance. She clings to the jacket, she comes with you when you fall. She is on top of you, pulling, pushing, crying, her hair in her face, in your face, your eyes. Long strands of hair catch on the buttons of your chest pockets, twist in among the teeth of the zipper. You want to push her off, but you don't, or she won't let you, she's got such a tight hold. The ground is wet, your hair is wet, your neck. This is part of the lawn that you haven't mowed. The grass is long, it reaches past your ears, above your head.

"Take it off!" she yells at you, her knees pinning your shoulders to the ground. "Take it off!" And then she just hits you, her palms slapping against your chest, your cheeks, your head. "Take it

off!" Your mind is out. It is not the pain so much as the sound that bothers you. The crack of her flesh against yours is loud in the dark. Porch lights go on in two houses across the street. The silent figures of neighbors lean from screen doors. They squint into your yard.

You pull your arms from under her knees. She falls back and regains her balance, still hitting you. Taking her wrists in your hands, you try to hold her steady, but she pulls free. "Shh," you say. "Calm down." She fights still, eyes red, cheeks wet, her hands avoiding yours.

"Take—"

"Stop."

"Take it—"

"Stop it."

"Off!"

"Stop," you tell her, and this time, she hears you. She freezes, her arm pulled back to strike you. It lowers slowly until her hands are in her lap, shoulders slumped. She is sitting on top of you, looking around the neighborhood. You can feel the eyes of men in their bathrobes, women with curlers in their hair. Her shame seeps down into you, and you are sorry that they saw her like that. She is limp, sitting on your chest, rising and falling with your breaths.

"Am I crazy?" she asks, covering her face. "Am I insane?"

"No," you want to tell her, "You're just out, too." You can tell, it's the way she holds herself. She has changed, something of her has been left behind. You are both out, but there are different outs, you are on opposite sides of the clearing, neither of you can cross the line. You can look in on her. She can see you. But the outs are separate, the boundaries solid.

"This is crazy," she mutters. "Keep your stupid jacket."

You want to tell her that when your mind comes back in, you will be the same, things will be all right again. You want to shout it at her, shake her shoulders until what you mean permeates the wall, works its way through the space between you. But she doesn't want to hear it. She picks herself up, stands on shaking feet. She stares down at you, her cheeks still wet, grass clinging and desperate in her hair. "You're gone," she says.

"No," you say. "Not gone, just out. I'm out."

"Goodbye," she says, shaking her head, turning around. If it would mean anything, you would run after her. You would stand on the porch and yell until she let you in. You would wait on the steps so that every time she went out of the house she would see you. She would see you, and then she would hear you. She would hear you, and then she would understand. She would understand, and then you would be in again. But you know that this can't happen. You could never shout loud enough to break the wall. Words will not crack the bricks between you, and there is nothing as frustrating as the futility of an outburst.

She goes up the walkway, takes the porch stairs with deliberate feet. The screen opens, then the wooden front door. It shuts, but you can see her through the window, her silhouette at least. The porch light goes off, and then she disappears, out of sight.

Anne-Marie Newton

looking glass

the first crack, a question—
did you sleep with her?

silence, and the receiver drops quietly into its cradle
breathing through four rings
nothing you didn't already know, you said
into the machine which answered because I couldn't

just like you couldn't
when love became lover instead of mother
and I had to make you break him
so you wouldn't break me

watching bad girls I wanted to be one,
because life imitates art—
or maybe because women imitate each other,
and I wanted to be you

you, my alter-image,
angelic in acrylic body paint
jack and coke and clove in one hand,
wedding rings on the other

I wanted you on the tip of my tongue,
in the palm of my hand, in the car and on the plane
anywhere with me, speechless and free
to do anything but leave me

alone
pumping art from a too-still heart
when you broke this mirror to break the other
and traded my reflection in for another

the final crack, a question—
did you sleep with her?

Brooke Campbell

Recurring

Hillary Berliner

The slightest trace of your thread
slid inside,
as I reached my hand out of the window
I had opened, to breathe.

I felt the twinge
like a needle urging the flesh,
(Two parts)
and tried to ignore it.
While wind slipped below my elbow,
through my sweater,
(It had traced over one filament,
I supposed,
and under another;
a pattern of undulating ease)
I watched my sleeve expand
and contract
with the pull of a motor.
The hair on my arm raised,
but I was accustomed to
the slight pull;
it remained taut.
I brush the hair down and remember with disgust,
its quick, wild dance underwater.

I am an element, too, but I am no longer pure.
And was I, ever?
Increasingly aware of my separated flesh,
I concentrate on your insertion
into my present,
a slowly solidifying clot,
as light remains on my eyelids
after they have closed.

Old Timer

Todd Cignetti

Leavetaking or 12th Birthday Letter (unsent)

Dear ,

I left town by the front door
under the thick haze of the moon
taking only the essential

- eleven year-old Chevy--half tank of gas
- one hundred sixty-seven dollars and
  thirty-three cents
  (all that was left in my account
  after I paid the next month's bills)
- three pairs of jeans, six t-shirts, two sweaters,
  the worn jacket that had been his before I co-opted it
- loaf of bread, box of dry cereal, banana, two sodas
- one bottle of vanilla body lotion

and I brought a photograph of you
in which only your face is visible a daisy
staring solemnly out of the heavy wrappings
which wouldn't allow your arms
to fall It sat on the dashboard
for almost three hundred miles
until the calm plane of the wide eyes
and the lulling rhythmic accusation
played out by the wheels became a paralyzing madness
and I shoved it behind the visor
and forced myself to see nothing but the flat finger of the road
crooking into the treeline
When I found a one room tenement cowering
above an old grocery
that came furnished with a hotplate
and a mattress that photograph
was the only thing I had of me
after the lotion ran out

When you think of me leaving
you should not call it abandonment
because that is too easy
too much like a break that will heal
in us both and this
this is an ulcer festering outward
You were always with me
impassive in a corner of whatever walls slept me
bright stare the past I could not shake
even after the haircut and twelve years
at the new job and twelve birthday presents
bought unwrapped unsent which I bore with me
each time I resettled

The leaving was

- minimum wage maximum hours at the supermarket checkout the song
  only scanner noise and the cash drawer
- the dark carpet in the single-wide
  which hid most of the rented stains
- the couch we could not afford to replace
- the way his eyes waking no longer
  knew me

and it was the fear which rose up
in me at the absolute helplessness of your cries
Those cries which silenced when they laid you
close-swaddled in my arms

I did not leave you except
that I could have found it in me
to hurt you had I stayed
Your face told me this
in its open round way
My uncertain arms a vise
around the circumference of your small body
still wombwrinkled told me this

We named you Amanda maybe
so you would at least know you deserved
to be loved But two weeks later
after days at home alone with you
I could not see my way clear
to anything except a drowning

and I stole out before you woke again
to ask another thing of me
On the road my breasts wept for you
As I receded I bought baby powder
which only sometimes I let myself use to remember
I carried your weight slung low
around my hips and the dark flame
of your eyes in my
waking dreams
So never think I did not take
you with me

Alexis Blane

He will bring them home

I have to put my trust and faith in the Lord
that He is taking care of them
and that He will bring them home to us.
Susan Smith, press conference

it is worst in the dark
when they crowd around my cot
making damp breath noises
that begin low and rise up,
pleading answers
through mouthfuls of silt

i try and pray them away
until sleep slips
in through the bars

each morning i claw my way up
from the bottom of the lake
(though i'd rather sleep, sunk)
anklestuck in muck kicking off shoes
plowing furrows through water
with my cupped hands
up to the murk light
listing in
slanting, dusted columns

i breathe water dark as blood
black spots widening wherever i look
until i break through the surface,
gasping awake to the barren womb
of my sonless cell.

Courtney Queeney

Glacier Grey, Chilean Patagonia

Alex Fattal

butterfly soldier

by fifteen living was unbearably tight
i mean tight like ribs poking out.and lips
squeezed quiet.tight when we knew the answer to a question
but our littlegirl voices got caught in the air.tight when
boys and teachers eyeballed our skirts. so tight we tried to disappear.

D arrived then in a well-ironed schooldress, oxfords
and long tidy braids. She spoke clipped, british and proper.
the teachers tried to make her a pet, but she stuck her tongue out.

the first one to tease her found his lips in sudden blood.
his head sunk down in a tirade
of West Indian abuse.
so we called her Fresh.her lips bubbled with cusswords and laughter.
she stood in her bones tall like a soldier and dared anyone
to take her for a little girl.

there were tactics.
in confrontation, she'd let the molecules go
dead in her beautiful face
and sling her hands behind her head
as though she was laying on a hammock
so that people were overtaken with sweat
before she had even opened her lips.

she took to shouting the lines of Buffalo Soldier
in an off key voice, as though it was a war cry.

"Figh-ting on Arr-i-val!
Fighting for Survi-i-val!"

you could hear her crazy yodel:

"Wo-yo-yo
Wo-yo-yo-yo"

twanging down the hallways.

by seventeen, she was undateable, unpunishable

she had allowed her hair to spaz into
a live and wilful 'fro. she caked her face in peppermint powder
so that she reminded everyone
of a vodou priestess.she rolled her eyes
wildly.let madness come into her face.spoke a mess of sugar and
poison.began to carry a pocketknife. the school agreed to send
her away. it was her 6th expulsion. her grades were good.

and i have seen Fresh, small and curved
in a sterile white room.
In stripes of moonlight that burned through the window slats
weeping as though she was breaking to pieces.

i believe she has a baby now, and lives with her
cousin in a London slum.
so what can I say? those were the butterfly soldier days.
she took the front line, broke up the air and let the rest of us
try out our woman-voices.

i wish her softness somewhere, sometime.

Mara Jebsen

Lily pads

Stephanie Schumann

III. the division of grace

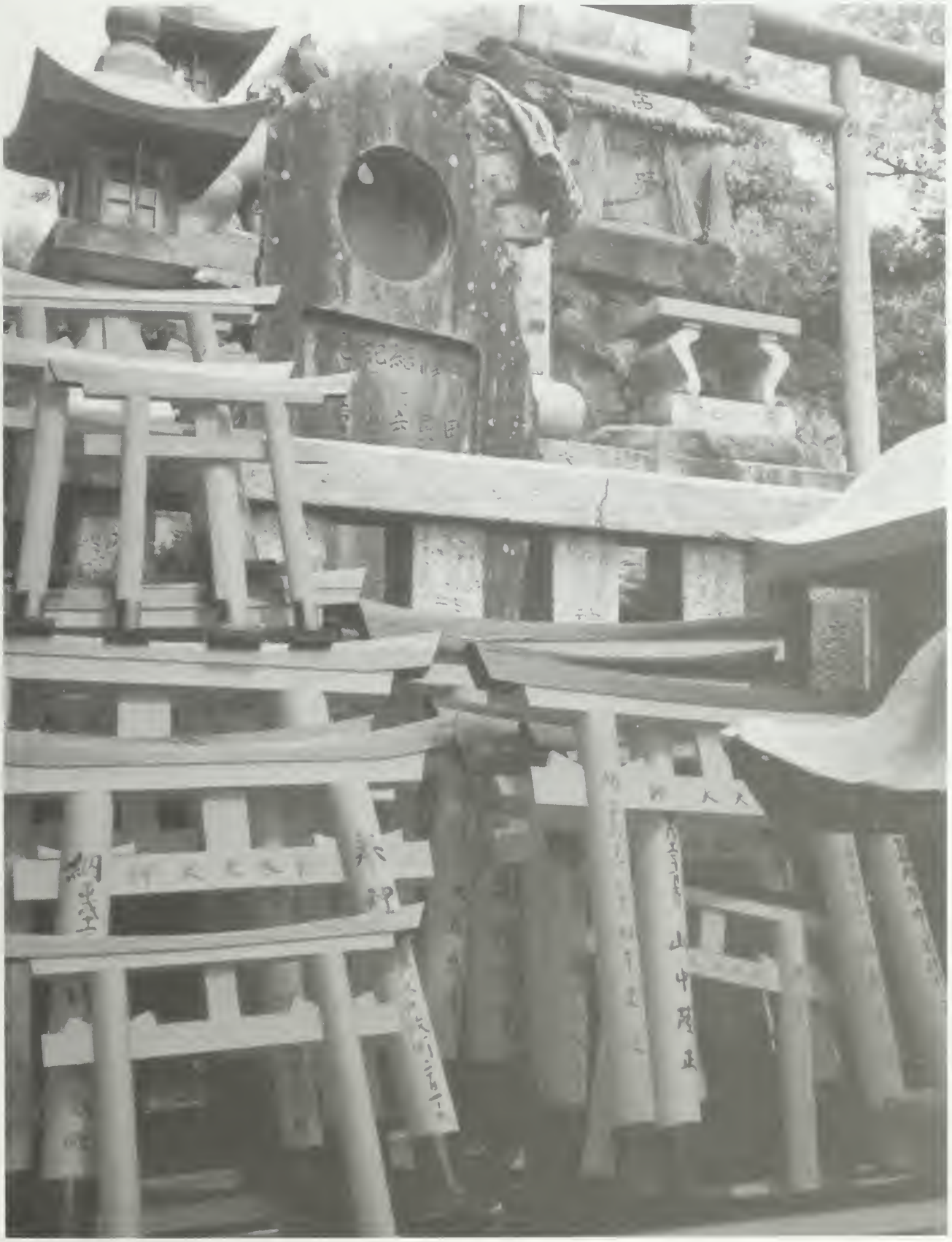
...but I consider play to be
A deeper outside thing,
a dreamed role-pattern,

Atacama

Alex Fattal

As in the division of grace
these long August days
Without proof.

Prayer Offerings



Kelly Grant

How the Children Got Rid of Their Mother

In August, it rained so much it pulled the leaves from the trees. The garden floated away. All of the chickens drowned. The baby would not stop crying. In August, it rained so much that the ladybugs came inside. They lived on the ceiling.

The children squealed when they found them in their beds, in between their blankets, under their pillowcases. The ladybugs crawled in the baby's crib. Sometimes they crawled in the baby's food. They were always marching and flying back and forth under the lights with tiny triangle wings. Some were red with black spots and others were brown with no spots. They were happy to live upside down on the ceiling. Maya, the nanny, thought the ladybugs came for the children and so she prayed.

In the beginning there were three or four on the windowsills. Then there was a pocket of twelve by the radiator. Then the next day the girl counted fifty-six of them above her bed. She then counted eleven of them on the wall for a total of sixty-seven. She was practicing her two-digit addition.

Maya would dust them off the ceiling and feed them to the lizards. One day the boy forgot to turn on the heat lamp and the lizards froze. Maya found them cold and stiff when she brought the next box of ladybugs in the morning. She had no choice but to put the captured ladybugs in with the dead lizards and cover the glass with a sheet. That way she wouldn't have to watch the ladybugs crawl over the lizards' eyes.

The mother wouldn't visit the nursery anymore for fear of the ladybugs. One day she walked in to try to make the baby stop crying and the ceiling swooped down and landed in her hair. She screamed and couldn't breath. The children didn't see her after that. The mother stayed in the dark where there were no windows. She didn't eat or shower or change her clothes. She didn't love the children anymore. She made Maya think of the lizards with their blank eyes.

The children began collecting the ladybugs in the box. They fed them pieces of their graham crackers. Sometimes they stuck their hands in with them and watched them zig zag between their fingers and up their arms. They giggled.

On the day it stopped raining the ladybugs fell from the ceiling. The children laughed and put them in the box with the others they had gathered. They covered the top with their hands. The baby stopped crying and watched them with wide-eyes. They told their mother that it had stopped raining and the ladybugs had flown across the ocean again. The mother came in and said, "Oh my, how they are looking well and she just wanted to gobble them up." So the children picked up the box and held it over their heads. They felt the ladybugs land in their hair and on their eyelashes and shoulders. They felt them crawl around in their ears and noses. The ladybugs marched down their small bodies like streams of water.

The mother opened her mouth in a silent scream and her hands flew up to her face. She left and never came back. The children smiled and the ladybugs flew and landed on their teeth.

Alison Niebanck

Archway at Pashupati

Stephanie Schumann

Under-wing

When you, the father, were born into war
and found depression to be commonplace,
you could not foresee beyond
the needs of your own body. It could sustain
itself on the longing for the rationed
things, like cold love from your mother,
month-old potato soup kept in the cellar,
or encouragement from your father.
You were small and not yet mine
You, in that body that liked to follow things
to their source, as a boy chasing after a red ball
bouncing down into the valley of adulthood,
down to the city, to what you were not supposed to see-
-like your friend Odin whose arm was no longer there
to wrap around his mother's neck and protect her
against her shuddering
-like your mother wearing all-too-red lipstick
on the day she sold her coat to the tailor
so that she could buy you shoes
-like the burning limbs of bridges
falling into midnight river waters
The sounds would not stop
nor would I want you to either
as each day you pulled yourself together and towards
me, surviving for the one day when all the sounds
would come rushing in together to make meaning of it all-
-all the drunken men at the bars gurgling
of places anywhere but there
-all the shiny German black boots marching
by you as you pressed your tiny belly
without breath under the bushes
-all the silenced screams in the woods for
a child or dignity lost

But that day, all swarmed through your town
in the form of a train that crashed
and wailed right past you, another soul begging

for salvation. Still, all turned ethereal
like absolution as the men from a place
called Russia unloaded unto the platform to stand
side-by-side, bloodline to lifeline,
asking for silence with silence.

Then, I imagine your face as vibrant music swam
to you for the first time, outside the confines of dark churches,
as these men, in foreign tongue, sang of something so
familiar you might dare call it honor and pride.
All in unison, their voice filled the dank cellars you kept
locked within your childhood, and made the explosion
of heavy joy possible.
Life could be born
outside that war, father, outside that body of yours with
sunken ribs and cracked lips. Something was let into you,
the boy, and the men were let out
into the depths of their own lungs and hoisted breath
until silence came to sound all the more full.
These men made you feel the domesticity of your own life,
that lay so far beyond those bones and that hunger.
Yet life always finds a way to feed life,
So you quietly raised your piece of bread,
to the dirt-stained hand of a Russian.
He was one among the many
who were forced to find prison, yet here,
found grace from a boy, younger than his own,
shunning words to preserve the silence.
In the only exchange you, the boy and the man, could have
between your smothered souls,
was his reply with his chiseled wooden bird,
marked with his prisoner number scratched into the under-wing.

I imagine you, father, grabbing it and running
from that train depot to leave those men to their war,
running with this bird out in front of you,
running up the hill to find your mother
to tell her the news of a numbered wing
that somehow could manage the power to fly.

Lisa Rying

The Timing of the Matter

The two things happened together, and they happened quickly. In the morning, she awoke sick to her stomach. She insisted on buying a test. She wanted to know for sure, right away.

By the time he got home with the test, the news had broken that the storm had taken an unexpected turn to the north. Florida was now in the clear, and they were ordering evacuations for the entire South Carolina coastline.

They were calling it a monster, a once-in-a-lifetime sort of thing. There could be catastrophic destruction, and their trailer was less than a mile from the beach.

There was the chance that they could lose everything.

In the car, with the test in a brown bag in the passenger seat, he decided that there was no choice. They would have to leave. The test would have to wait until later.

When he got home, she was sitting on the couch with her knees under her. She was trying to stitch up a pair of his pants, but her hands were shaking and the needle was tangled in the fabric.

"Did you get it?" she asked.

"Yeah. It's in the car." He ran his hands down his shirt, smoothing it out. He looked around the room. He was trying to decide what to start packing first.

She got up and put the needle down. She put her arms around his waist and laid her head on his wide chest, She expected his hand to begin with her hair, the way it always did, but it did not.

"I'm nervous too," she said. "Let's just get it over with."

"It's not that," he said, moving away from her. "You haven't heard, have you?"

"Heard what?"

"The hurricane is coming this way. They just ordered Myrtle Beach to evacuate."

She went to the door. Outside, it was cloudy, but there was no wind or rain. She could hear small things, like the birds in the trees and the cars on the interstate.

"It doesn't look bad," she said. "It's not even raining."

"It's still a day away," he said. He started for the bedroom. He opened a closet and began pulling shirts off their hangers.

"We have to go, Diane," he said from the other room. "If it hits here, we'll never make it. We have to go while we still have time."

She picked up the pair of pants and the needle to steady her hands.

"What about the test?"

He grunted and she heard things fall from the shelf in the closet. "Where the hell are the suitcases?"

She went to the bedroom. Her feet were slow, and she nearly tripped over the pants that dangled from her arm.

"Ed. I said, what about the test?"

He dropped some shirts on the bed and came over. He took her face in his hands, steadied it up to his, and gave a half smile. He kissed her forehead. He was steady, and he was firm in his voice.

"We can't think about that now. It will have to wait until we see what happens with this. This is life or death."

She turned and walked back into

the living room. "The test is life or death, too," she said.

"What is that supposed to mean?" he asked. "Diane, don't talk crazy. We haven't made any decisions yet."

She shook her head and went outside. "I knew it," she said. "I knew you wouldn't want to talk about tit."

He threw his hands up. He would not argue now. He could not help the timing of the matter. They would have to get through the storm first.

Inside, he began to empty the dressers. They had only been living together a few months, and most of their things were still divided. He packed his first, and then he started with the photo albums. He decided to let her figure out what she wanted to take.

They had only been living together a few months, and most of their things were still divided.

After a time, he heard the front door shut. Then he heard her footsteps going towards the bathroom.

He threw down the shoes in his hands and ran for the bathroom. He was a fairly short man, but still strong enough in the legs from his track days. He saw her blonde hair going through the bathroom door, then heard it click from the inside.

He hit the door still in a jog and twisted the knob, expecting his motion to carry him inside. But the door held and he banged loudly against it.

"Dammit, Diane, open the door. You can't take that without me."

"I want to know," she said through the door. "This can't wait, Ed."

He heard plastic ripping and the faucet start running. He pushed harder against the door, then hit it with his open hand, slapping it until it turned red.

He stopped and breathed. He let his voice soften. He was getting out of control. He had to be gentle with her.

"Diane, please. I'm sorry I yelled. Just let me in the door. Please, Diane. We have to get through this together."

The sounds stopped. He knew how these tests worked. When he was younger, a girlfriend had taken one once. It had been negative.

"Promise me," she said, her voice shaking. "Promise me you won't yell at me."

"Diane—"

"Promise me, Ed."

"I promise."

There was another silence, then the door rattled. He tried it and pushed it open.

She was sitting on the toilet, her pants around her ankles. On the white sink, a small cup sat filled with a milky liquid with a blue tint.

"You took it," he said.

"I have to know, Ed. You know how I am about waiting. I'll go crazy."

He sat down beside her on the floor and ran a hand through his hair. Outside, he heard a tree limb brush against the top of the trailer.

"Pull your pants up," he said. "I can't talk to you sitting there like that."

She stood and buttoned them. "It's turning blue, Ed. Look."

He stared at the floor. His hands were white and clenched.

"Ed, look."

"I saw it when I came in, Diane."

She knelt on the floor beside him. "You don't want it do you?"

"Diane, Chrissake. It's been five minutes."

She picked up the glass and took it with her into the hallway. "I knew

you wouldn't want it.," she said. "I mean, I know it wasn't planned, but I thought at least we could talk about it. We could work things out."

He caught her in the kitchen and put his arms around her. He kissed her neck and then her shoulders, half thinking of taking her shirt off.

"I didn't say that, Diane. But we can't think of this right now. I'm sorry. I know it's bad. But I can't help what's happening and the timing. What's happening outside is serious. We might lose everything. And then what? Then what will we do?"

She pulled away from him. She walked, feet lighter now, the glass still in her hand, back to the living room.

"It wouldn't have mattered if the storm came or not. I heard your voice this morning. You said that we shouldn't make any quick decisions."

"Diane, dammit. I'm not making any decisions."

"Oh, I know alright. I know alright, Eddie."

She was sewing again. "Are you going to help me pack?" he asked.

She laid her hair back onto the couch and closed her eyes. She hummed something that he could not place.

"I don't want to go anywhere," she said. "I want to stay here and talk about this. The weathermen are still saying that it might turn to the north."

"We can't take that chance."

"Go ahead," she said. "I'll pack later."

He went to his things. He would not fight it right now. Yes, this other thing was in his head, but he would concentrate on the room.

Not long ago, they had been happy. They had met when they were each twenty-three in Columbia. She worked as a secretary in a high school, and he worked on homes. After five months, he was offered a better deal with maintenance on boats at the beach. It was more permanent, and he loved the ocean.

His parents owned the trailer. They agreed to let him pay the lease. He told her that he loved her and wanted to live with her.

It was the first time for either of them living with someone. There was talk of getting married, but he wanted to wait until the job was more solid. Neither of them had the money for anything too drastic, he said.

He thought of these things in the evening as the wind picked up and the rain started. He felt hollow. He was not a man given to analyzing his emotions. Diane was more of the talker. He said that she had gotten him to open up more in their seven months than everyone else combined.

Her eyebrows did things when he talked like this. It made him feel clumsy.

He was not sure if she believed this. Her eyebrows did things when he talked like this. It made him feel clumsy.

She stayed on the couch while he packed. He walked by her, but she was not talking to him. He made jokes each time he passed.

Once he stopped and said simply, "We'll get through this."

Finally, she stopped him. Sweat was trickling down his forehead and mixed with rainwater. "Promise me we'll talk more about it when we get to Columbia," she said. "Then I'll relax."

"Okay," he said. "Yeah, Diane. Of course. That's all I want. Just to get

out of here before we worry about it, you know? That's all I'm saying."

Her eyebrows did not move, but her lips twitched. He was unsure of how to take this, but he pulled her tight to him and told her he would start some soup before they left.

When they sat down to eat, he could hear trees rattling against the top of the trailer. Pine cones fell and made clanging noises. Every now and then, the entire thing shook and shuddered. Rain was coming in through the screen on the porch, and he was glad that had wrapped the things in trash bags.

The kitchen was quiet except for the sound of his spoon on the bowl. She sat across from him, watching him lift it in quick arcs to his mouth. Every now and then he dribbled some on his chin.

It occurred to him that he might have to carry her out the door.

There was something in this that bothered her. She could not watch him. Nor could she eat.

When he was done, he looked across at her. She was playing with the red tablecloth, running a finger through a hole in it.

"You're not hungry," he said.

"Not anymore."

"Diane. What?"

"Nothing." She got up and went back to the television.

"Ten minutes," he said, putting the dishes in the sink. "Let's get out of here in ten minutes."

"Ed," she called. "They're saying it's still turning."

He felt his stomach drop slightly. He dropped the plate in the sink, and a piece broke off of the corner.

"That's great, Diane. But we still have to go."

She was quiet. The television was louder now. He could hear every word.

"Diane. It's mandatory."

He started pacing. He walked over the same piece of tile each time. He clicked his right heel on it. He looked at his watch.

They had just been getting through it. Now she was stiffening again. He was certain of it.

It occurred to him that he might have to carry her out the door.

He went into the living room. "Diane," he said.

"I want to wait a little longer."

"No. Let's go now."

She turned the television up louder. "Just listen a second, Ed." Her voice was shriller. "Just listen."

It was then that he grabbed her wrists in his, pulled her off of the couch. He was breathing harder. He was panicking. He was not thinking, he told himself. They just had to go.

The car was packed. The rain was getting harder.

These two things at once.

"Diane, we can't stay. Do you understand? I can't help the timing of the matter. I haven't made any decisions. None. We can talk about this later."

"Eddie!" she said. "That hurts. Let go!"

She squirmed, but he held tight. He would carry her. This seemed to be the best thing.

Halfway to the door, she wiggled loose, sliding out of his hands and onto the carpet. She went onto all foors and out the front door to a corner of the porch. The rain hit him as soon as he went out after her.

"See?' he said. "See? It's coming this way!"

"Bastard!" she said. She picked up a board in the corner of the porch. "Don't come near me! I know what you want!"

"Diane, dammit! Put that down!" He heard his voice louder and angry. He wanted it to be still, but he could not. The rain was in big drops and salty, from the ocean. It stung his hands.

He stood facing her. They did not speak. Then she dropped the board and began to cry. After a second, he went over to her and reached out to put his arms around her.

"Sonofabitch," she breathed and hit him full in the stomach. She went for him again, her hair flying and her eyes closed. The first one knocked the breath out of him, but he doubled over and pushed her away.

She stepped back. He tried to breathe but the breath would not come.

"I can go to the car on my own. You won't carry me."

She went inside, and he heard the television stop. Light began to go out.

He let his hands fall at his sides. He meant to tell her a few things. She could not push him around like that. He had done nothing to deserve that.

When he saw her, he said nothing. She was packing her things.

She finished a few minutes later and brushed past him on the way to the car. She shut her door and waited on him to come. He locked the trailer and made sure that the boards he had put over the windows were secure. He felt like throwing up. He thought of losing everything, of coming back and seeing nothing but aluminum siding and cloth stuffing and an overturned couch, a shirt here and there.

He thought of this and felt nothing.

In the car, she did not speak unless spoken to. The interstate was packed, but they made good time.

After a while, he leaned over and put his hand on hers. She did not take it, but she did not take it away.

"Diane," he said. "Just look at me ."

She turned and her eyes were red, but her face was still. Her other hand was on her stomach, as it had been for the entire ride. This terrified him, but he could not stop looking at it.

"We'll get through this," he said. "It will only be a couple of days. Then we can come back and see what the best thing to do is. Doesn't that sound like a good idea?"

She turned back to the road. Water was beginning to stand in places, and the hundreds of brake lights all around them reflected off of it in a red flash.

"Doesn't it?"

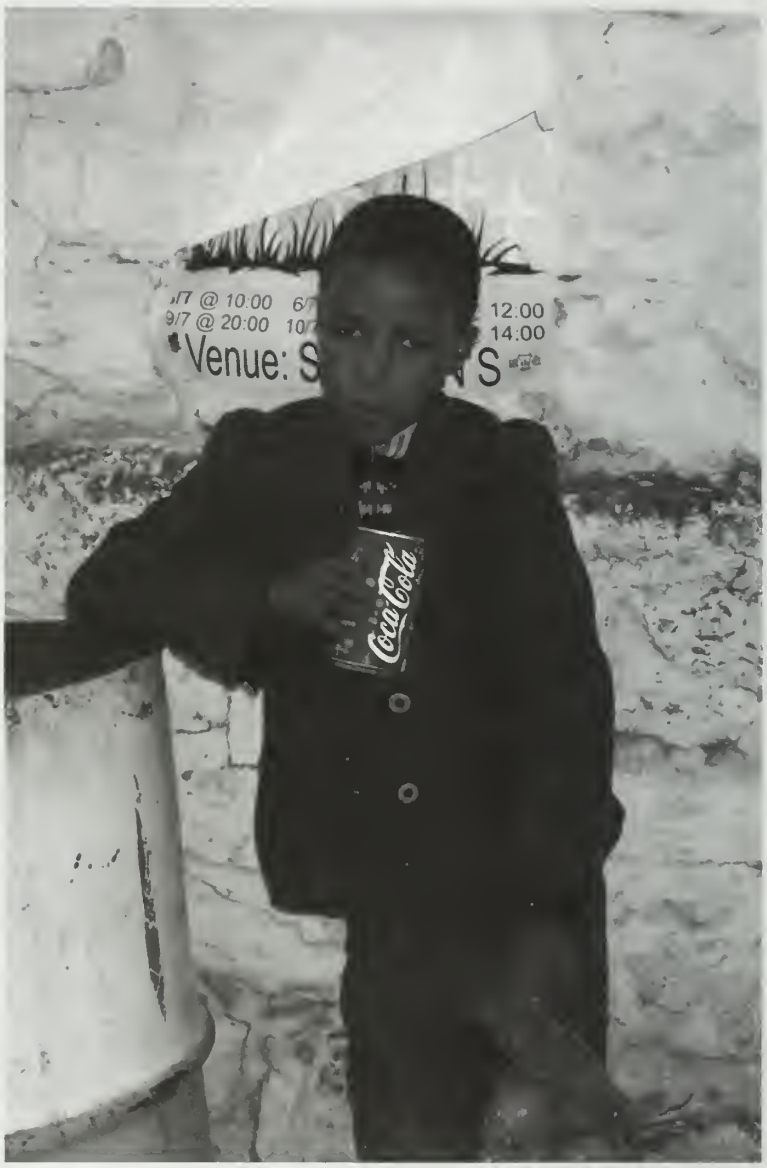
She was quiet, and this made him forget about this hurricane. With the cars stacked around them and the radio giving out emergency information and the light now fading, he knew then that something had happened between these two things.

She had made her decision. In this, he was certain.

Michael Gause

Post-Apocalyptic Backyard Picnic

Todd Cignetti



Untitled

Alex Fattal

My Gaza

Laila El-Haddad

Young lost boys
silently hollered anguish
roasted corn cobs
blistered sweet potatoes
(a *shekel* a piece)
on a grill rusted
by salt humidity
on a shore that bore
incessant crashes
of this frustrated Mediterranean
mixed with tired arguments
sewage, almond trees,
citrus dreams and dream palaces
dead struggles and *sabr*
and 8 temporary refugee camps, 55 years old

Editor's Note:
The Arabic word *sabr* has a dual meaning, the first being patience and the second being the cactus fruit or prickly pear that is endemic to Palestine in general and to Gaza in particular. Enjoying its seedy sweet interior requires the peeling of the thorny outside layer.

Today I return to Rosemont
to leave plastic pink carnations
for Hildagaarde Emma Raasch
who came from Germany
to call these mountains home.

She once told me
how crossing the Atlantic
with my dad, she fed him
bananas and sang a lullaby
to keep him quiet.

Arriving in New York
as a young war-time bride,
she saw the bright signs
of busy lives burning at all hours
and thought she might be happy
in this city—its skyscrapers,
street bums, crowded market squares
not so different from the ones she left.

Three-weeks later another long journey,
(this time by train) buried her
deep in the heart of Appalachia.
No big city or indoor-plumbing,
just a small house with tool shed
and a vegetable garden out back
on acres of farm land.

I wonder when she began to understand
the aged hillsides rise and fall
of slow, rolling, backcountry drawl,
each word carefully packaged before spoken.

I imagine her first summer in these mountains
waiting for her soldier husband.
She learned to work the tobacco,
riding behind the big tractor
its two back wheels as tall as she standing.

Now I turn off the main road,
pass through the gate of the cemetery,
and drive up and down the narrow rows,
searching for the big tree, a landmark,
that my father says gives her shade.
My mother says it gives my grandfather shade
when he comes to visit.

What is Buried?

But I cannot find it, so I cannot find her.
The rows are all the same: too straight, too ordered, too much.
My memories do not come in boxes when they come.

Instead, I remember you in bright flashes and broken pieces.
Like the summer we rode together on the setting machine.
Your hands guided mine while I watched
a line of ants climb over the earth,
swarming toward the tiny green plant
we just pushed into the ground.
You laughed when I licked the gummy residue
from my hands and scrunched my face up in a sour grin.

When I first saw you in the hospital,
you made a joke about what a person has to do
to get some visitors. It was March. You promised
to be well in time for the tobacco.
I cannot remember what happened to the tobacco that year,
but I still remember you when I drive past the farm.

How many years did I watch you,
shirt sleeves rolled up and a loosely tied kerchief
to keep the sweat from your eyes
as you stood in the bed of the truck
lifting sticks of tobacco to the men to hang
high on the rafters in the barn.
No one in the valley would have ever thought
You had not been born for this work.

Mid-way down the last gravel road
I stop the car. Here is the big oak tree.
I walk until I see the smooth gray rectangle
with rounded edges and the simple lettering
that spells out your full name.

Falling to my knees in the dry brown grass,
I reach forward to touch all that I can of you here.
Digging my fingers into the cut crevices,
I trace the marks that spell your name,
pausing over the Raasch that's mine too.

This is the Place

Twice the Mormons had issued the call for gathering on the American frontier and twice they had been uprooted. Zion in Jackson County, Missouri, had been ravaged by her enemies while her children fled to set up stakes in other places. But these in turn proved disappointing because the New Order came in conflict with the Old. The Mormons were not free from interference by those who came among them but who had no part in their enterprise.

But now in the far west, separated from the borders of civilization by a thousand miles, they were to find, for the first time, full range for their colonizing ambitions. Here nature had reserved for them alone unlimited resources with which to build; not to lavish upon them, but to yield in return for their hard labor. Here also, far removed from the center of Zion, but still in a land "choice above all others" Brigham Young fell heir to the prophet's role as builder of the "latter-day Kingdom of God." The "stakes" would now be driven in the valleys of the mountains.

The advance company of the Mormon pioneers filed through the canyon which opened upon the Salt Lake Valley on July 22, 1847, followed by Brigham Young on the 24th. This historic pronouncement "This is the Place" served as a benediction upon the mountain circled wilderness. Just as Jackson County, Missouri had been transformed into a Mormon "Zion" under the very feet of the unseeing Missouri frontiersmen, so now the Salt Lake Valley became a hallowed place. The river, winding its course between the fresh and the salt water lakes, became the Jordan and the entire region became a new Holy Land. After all, no land is more sacred than the vision of its occupants and the most barren desert may become Bethel to the heart set on its consecration.

This Is The Place: We learn this in elementary school Utah history to be the declaration that founded our state. We learn it such that each word is capitalized, each word staked firmly by certainty, each word its own name. As a second-grader, I imagined the stern, bearded Brigham Young booming forth in the voice of an ox, a voice heavy and deliberate enough to pull a wagon train behind it, to cut the trail for a second wave of handcart pioneers after that, to gather its echoes into the stones that would build a city. And so to remain, like the statement itself, forever present tense.

Reverent histories call his pronouncement revelation, prophesy, benediction. In these terms the pioneers' settling in the Salt Lake Valley was not so much a decision as a fulfillment of divine will. The trek-weary pioneers may have wondered, even asked aloud, when will we get there, where is the end of this

harsh and necessary road. Brigham Young was not responding to them at all. "This Is The Place" answers nothing. His was pure utterance, the unveiling of truth, God's law rendered in a human tongue. This Place which Is had always been, would always be.

To ask, "What Is this Place?", then, is to enter into a circular mantra: This Is The Place, The Place Is This. Laid flat, the statement curls along in half along the centerline of "Is," so that "This" and "Place" meet, match, mesh into one identical point; that fusion accomplished, it becomes the blueprint of a society. The driving imperative for the Place is to become itself, to seal its definition, to be what it is. Unquestionable.

And yet, it seems, someone did ask. Clara Decker Young, one of Brigham's wives and one of three women in the first company of pioneers, told her children:

> The trail was very dusty, and then when it rained the mud was disagreeable. We saw thousands of buffaloes, and herds of elk would often pass us. When we reached Echo Canyon, it seemed as if the hardest part of our journey was before us, and it was, for no one can conceive of the hard work it took to get our company through Emigration Canyon to the valley. When my husband said, "The is the place," I cried, for it seemed to me the most desolate in all the world."

"A land 'choice above all others.'" "The most desolate in all the world." Did such statements ever face each other? Did Brigham, sitting back down in his carriage — he was sick with mountain fever, the declaration was an effort — see his wife weeping? What did he say, and when did she stop? Revelation, prophesy, benediction: the pronouncement made her cry. Where the reconciliation? How did desolation turn kingdom?

Today, at the mouth of Emigration Canyon and across from the Hogle Zoo, stand This Is The Place State Park, where, the Fodor's guidebook tells us, "Utah's past meets its present."

> On July 24, 1987, Mormon leader Brigham Young looked out over the Salt Lake Valley and announced to the ragged party behind him, "This is the right place." So began the religious settlement that would become Salt Lake City. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, as the Mormon Church is officially known, continues to shape the city, which has evolved into a winter-sport destination, a center for biomedical research, and the gateway to the natural wonders of Utah.

"This is the right place:" not "this is it," but "this should be it, this is the correct it — but still, we might choose otherwise." The phrase houses a decision. Revelations are not decisions. "This is the right place" admits the possibility of a wrong place, of faulty prophesy: *The most desolate in all the world.* It lacks the flat certitude of "This Is The Place" — the syllables don't balance two-to-two, the magic crease isn't there. The mantra is broken by a nod to Clara's despair. "This is the *right* place:" Such lines serve fine to pitch a tent by, but they do not found Zions.

It might, however, be more fitting for a guidebook. For the traveler, there

are other places to go. Too strident an introduction to the state might be off-putting, might make one wonder if Utah has indeed "evolved." Now, Fodor's tells us, the Church *shapes* the city rather than *being* the city. The absolute identity of "This Is The Place" has opened up; the city is a "gateway" rather than a singular destination.

> We came in full view of the valley or Basin (of the) Salt Lake and the land of promise held in reserve by the hand of God for a resting place for the Saints upon which a portion of the Zion of God will be built. . . . Thoughts of pleasing meditation ran in rapid succession through our minds while we contemplated that not many years hence — the house of God would stand upon the top of the mountain; while the valleys would be covered with orchards, vineyards, gardens and fields by the inhabitants of Zion, the standard be unfurled for the nations to gather thereto. — from the journal of Wilford Woodruff, 1847

Indeed, most prominent among its mottoes at this moment is "The World Is Welcome Here." In 2002, Utah will lend its winter to the Olympic Games, a transaction that has occasioned, among other things, bright new license plates, a bobsled run, and massive construction work on the freeways to prepare them for the fans. Of course, there has been dissent. There have been protests, angry letters in the paper. There are green-and-white bumper stickers that say "2002: THIS IS *NOT* THE PLACE!" Seeing such a sticker on a car at a dusky morning stoplight, waiting to wedge itself into the fuming drag of a morning commute squeezed onto city streets as a digital sign blinks cheerfully by the former freeway onramp, "FREEWAY OPEN JULY 2002" — it occasions a shrug, a faintly sympathetic smirk perhaps, a quick calculation of the days between now and July 2002.

To invoke the "This Is The Place" benediction thus is to ring the bell on a promise not kept, a pronouncement unfulfilled. It suggest a betrayal. More so, perhaps, because the people making this suggestion are not the ones to who Brigham's words were addressed. "This Is Not The Place" is a claim made by environmentalists, liberals, folks outside the Church and business communities. By re-working and re-punctuating Brigham's declaration, they appropriate some of his authority — implying that those supposedly responsible for carrying out his plans have failed.

> *The Mormons were not free from interference by those who came among them but who had no part in their enterprise.*

A statement brought to face its opposite upon the turf of its first utterance, in dispute over the fate of that turf, the meaning of that utterance. This, it seems, is the ultimate in circularity — is the place, is not the place, on this place, what is this place, it is this place.

Laura Podolsky

IV. ...and then you aren't there

I think you exist
only

To tease me into doing it,

on your level,

and then you aren't there

Or have adopted a different attitud

Room With a View

Jason Nichols

give us this day

you told stories to the dinner table
of things that happened (only within your own mind)
as history

surrounding yourself with children
who answered to our names,
wearing borrowed clothing and faces

there's the empty chair,
the missing male.

the children chew silently
cringing around the corners of the table.
nothing is ever nourished
in this house, or fed full.

(they do learn things from you; to be quiet, averted:
how the body can crumple itself
like a piece of trash in order
not to be seen
questions should not be answered
if they can be avoided; no answer
is the right answer

sometimes these lessons
will work,
they are never
the right lessons)

they hide from your eyes.
your lies
are becoming their lives

even as they flee
(still hungry)
to their separate cells

the faces of their plates
still scarred with food.

sitting dreaming drinking tea

Mr. Longley's face flattens to a
half-moon plate
against the
tissue-stained glass.

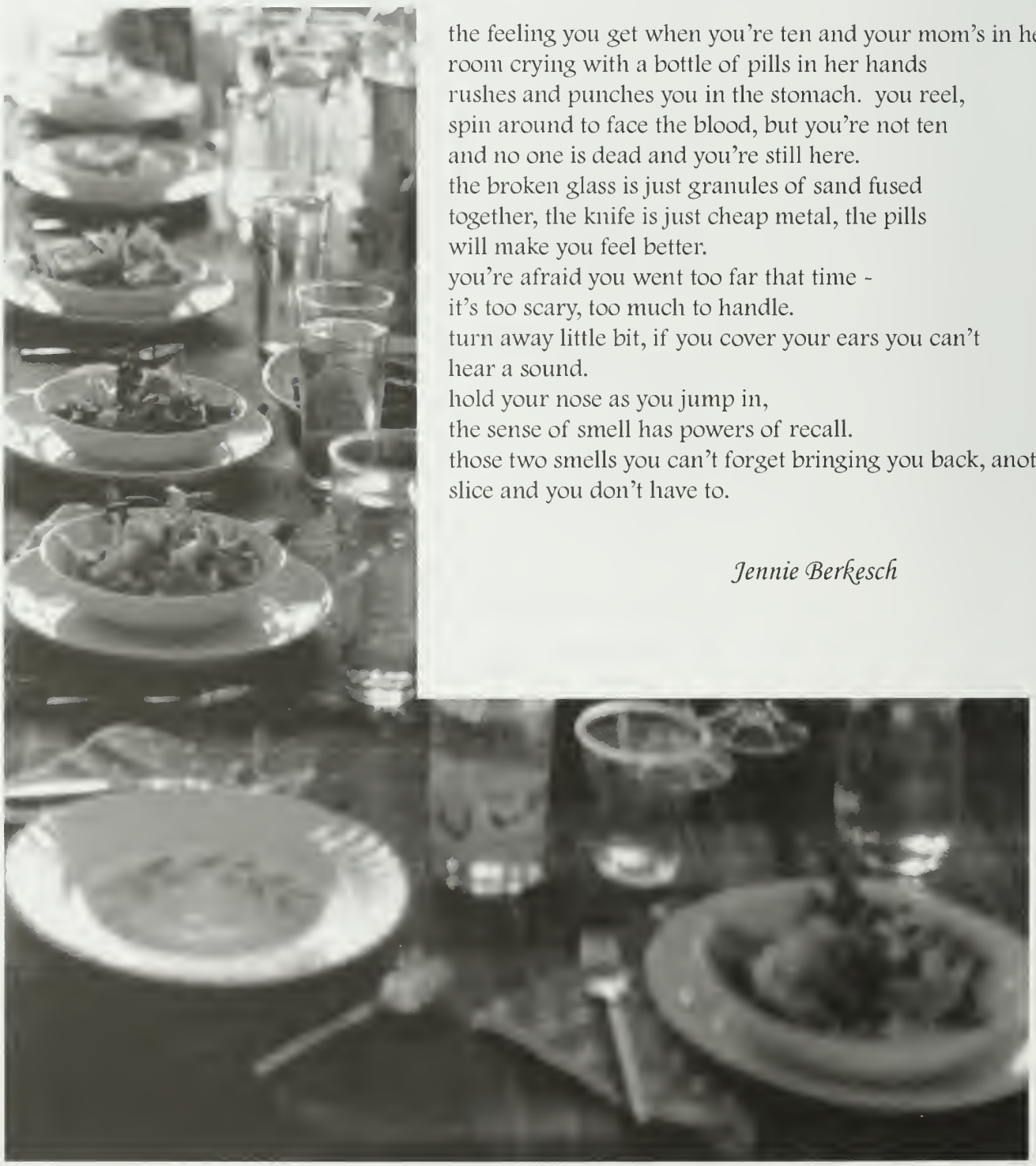
Some fragments,
darker than others,
lend their hues
to his complexion. One rose
finger paints the cheek,
another smoothes his
wrinkled forehead.

In the filtered sunlight,
his eyes deepen to
soul-swallowing
wells. His smile
deepens, flexes
with all agility of a
river snake:
tooth-twister, bone cruncher,
candy lips to catch-quick and kiss her.
One curve for sunlight,
the other for shadow.

Two slow-peeling hands
knit and unknit
the handle of a teacup,
search and unsearch the
walls of the skyglass
mausoleum;

a white pillowcase girl
skipping through the yard
stops and smiles.

lessons



the feeling you get when you're ten and your mom's in her
room crying with a bottle of pills in her hands
rushes and punches you in the stomach. you reel,
spin around to face the blood, but you're not ten
and no one is dead and you're still here.
the broken glass is just granules of sand fused
together, the knife is just cheap metal, the pills
will make you feel better.
you're afraid you went too far that time -
it's too scary, too much to handle.
turn away little bit, if you cover your ears you can't
hear a sound.
hold your nose as you jump in,
the sense of smell has powers of recall.
those two smells you can't forget bringing you back, another
slice and you don't have to.

Jennie Berkesch

untitled

Todd Cignetti

numb

I didn't feel it
as it
Passed.

It didn't drag me,
kicking and screaming,
Away.

Or else it tried,
but I was too weak.

They told me to swallow.
This time
it was charcoal,
absorbing my death.

My dad came.
From where?
said they were going to fix
my head.

Jennie Berkesch

Residue

My hands hurt; that's the first thing that comes to mind when I think of that day. They hurt in a way that's like teething, like a tooth that needs to break through the skin and it's not entirely a bad feeling and I've always thought that maybe it's similar to the sensation a snake must have when it sheds its skin--you know, the out-with-the-old, in-with-the-new phenomenon that's got to be painful, but vaguely refreshing at the same time. Like getting to see a more intimate part of yourself, but at the expense of scraping off the outer layer and not that snakes think about this sort of thing--I guess that's why I'm a human and not a snake, although I do know quite a few humans that occasionally remind me of snakes and that's fine, at least they're not stuck thinking about how their hands hurt. It's strange, the stuff our mind chooses to remember. That day, the day that I had secretly loathed for years, the day that I had mulled over in my mind and chewed up and tried to swallow in a futile hope of somehow getting rid of it when I knew all along that I would only internalize it more--out of all the things that could stick to my psyche, that day I remember my hands hurt.

I do remember a few other things. I remember the way the sun hit the windshield of my car as we were driving back from lunch, how it made me squint because I didn't have my sunglasses with me, how I'd lost my sunglasses the week before and how my mom had told me I should only buy sunglasses from gas stations because I lose them all the time anyway and how I had blown the issue up into one of ridiculous general proportions saying that only someone from her generation could make a comment like that, so pessimistic and so goddam PRACTICAL and I hate practicality--it makes everything seem so pathetically *earthly* of this time, of this place. You can't just quit buying sunglasses you like; it just isn't an option--how do you just *quit?* I told her that, and I also told her that I was simply unwilling to settle for sunglasses that I didn't like, I told her that I would rather suffer the curse of always losing something I loved rather than *for one moment* possessing something I never even liked and she scoffed a bit at this and laughed.

I remember the way the gears of my car were grinding that day--maybe I wasn't shifting smoothly or maybe there was something wrong with the synchronizer because my dad had mentioned that earlier, but I think maybe I just wasn't paying enough attention. My sister used to tell me that the way a guy drives a stick-shift is related to how he makes love, and ever since she told me that I've never been able to watch a guy work a five-speed without a smirk on my face and the smirking has got to be annoying, for the guy I mean, but how can I help it? It's my sister's fault--you can't ever get away from people and it sometimes distresses me that others can have so much of an effect on you without any involvement on your part--it seems somewhat unnatural. Things would be far easier if you had some sort of human-strainer attached to your body, that way you could only allow those people who you wanted to deal with through and the others wouldn't be able to get to you at all. I suppose a human-strainer might seem silly, but so are a lot of people. The gears were grinding and I could have just been distracted, I could have just been thinking about what was going to happen when we got back to his house, but it was probably just due to the glare of the sun and me not having any sunglasses and it's odd the way everything is interconnected, isn't it? That's the difference between people and snakes. The inter-connectedness, I mean. Or maybe everything's connected for snakes too, it's just that they don't *realize* the connections are there.

I remember the glare of the sun and I remember the grinding of the gears but I can't remember our conversation; I can't remember his face. It's strange, the stuff our minds choose to remember. I got out of the car when we got to his house and as I was getting out I stubbed my toe on the cement of his driveway because it was August and it was hot and I was wearing flip-flops. I think I did a bit of cursing the cement which would make more sense since it wasn't my toe's fault, but regardless he thought I was cursing at the stubbed yoe, or maybe I was cursing him because I was upset about leaving him and this made things awkward.

The confusion presented an interesting sort of dilemma, because how can you explain that you weren't cursing over the situation at hand, that presently, you were more worried about your little toes than you were about not seeing him for three and a half months, that we are all tied to our physicality in brutal and awful ways, that not only can we not escape other people but we can't escape our own bodies--how do you explain all of that? And even if you were able to explain it, that still wouldn't take into account that underneath it all, underneath the glare on the windshield, underneath the stubbed toe and the sunglasses and the grinding of the gears you really were breaking at the seam, you really were torn in two by the thought of being without him.

And god it wasn't that I was so sad to leave him--that wasn't it--I mean, it was, of course, but I was far more tormented by the whole idea that I was going to learn to live without him--that eventually, it was going to be okay, and that I would get *used to it.* I didn't want to ever be okay without him, never wanted to or thought I could but there was no way out--you're put on this road and shoved off and made to feel as if there are no other ways around it, and I knew in reality they were right--time and distance would numb me and whether it be days months years eventually I wouldn't feel the urge to tell him those everyday details that build up like residue and turn into life itself, and that this would be *alright* with me, that this in fact was what was *supposed* to happen, that was that was what the root of the agony. That the best and the strongest relationships in your lifetime can be obliterated in that sickening slow way that creeps up on you and never shows itself until it's too late--it frightened me, made everything seem too fleeting and fruitless and I supposed that he could see that fear when I looked up and said good-bye.

Or maybe he couldn't--I don't really recall. I think maybe he said something about having to go inside and pack up the rest of his stuff, and it seemed absurd that he was talking about boxes and suitcases when he wasn't going to see me for three and a half months but my toe was still throbbing and I was still squinting so I hugged him and muttered something that wasn't quite coherent and got back into my car. As I was pulling out of the driveway I distinctly remember thinking I was going to have to get my car fixed and I looked back because looking back seemed like the appropriate thing to do and he was still standing in the driveway, looking at the cement, and it wasn't the cement's fault and really there wasn't anything to do about it and maybe we weren't that different from snakes after all. I put down the windshield visor because the glare was making my eyes water and I was afraid that I was going to get into a wreck and I remember thinking I didn't want them to have to put something in my eulogy about the sun or the stubbed toe or the grinding of the gears and it's strange, the stuff our minds choose to remember.

Jen McDonald

my father brings home light

my father breaks down the kitchen wall
in a house that is newly ours.
he does it after work, to relax.
it is an old house, but not to us—
we don't quite fit into it yet, something
seems missing (a voice, an empty
bedroom.) the kitchen reflects
some past decade, from before my birth, wall-
paper peeling off, abandoning plaster
in layers that bend away
from the ceiling and floor
to be torn off by my father's large hands.
scraps sweep down; oversized,
dead leaves, brittle and yellow
as my grandfather's skin,
stained with smoke before his death
in the house my father grew up in.
it is the partition wall, separating space to cook
from space to eat, that must go.
he calls the room *cramped.*

i am as amazed
by my father's strength, the heft
and swing of his sledgehammer,
as i would have been at six, reaching his knee.
look—how he does not hesitate, or
rest. dust and plaster, fine as burnt
bone in an urn, cloud up in the air,
sift down to dust the furniture with years
we've yet to live here. here is a miracle
who builds things and breaks them down
with equal care. his eyes are dry. he sends
his children to school looking presentable,
and fights the presence of the wall, each day.
no one would think anything wrong
with this house, who did not live here.

(i am thinking, he must picture my mother
in the wall. smack. there is her face: crack.
i don't blame him. i would like a wall
of my own, to undo in this way.
understand: i have no mother, anymore.
understand: he is the least violent of men.)

mornings, he offers us breakfast, desperate
we accept. we eat to placate. if there is sanity
in routine, we will find it through repetition.
he will make this work, a wall cannot stand
against twenty-three years of frustration unleashed
upon it. he will skin the outer walls, they will be
reborn in new paper, in growing layers
like the expanding rings of a tree—except this one,
in the middle of the room, thick and awkward.
a mistake in composition, severing space.

he pauses, his hair aged by the ash of plaster.
grinning: look, he says. there are only
jagged stalactites reaching down from the ceiling,
a row of uneven stubs. the rest, the paint and
plywood, the inner studs and bolts of it,
lies around his feet, mounded as a grave.
he says, look
how the room opens up (an extended hand)
without that wall
in the way.
did you ever think there could be
this much light, let loose?
i feel wonder for the first time
in a decade. my father
has made us a room,
he has brought home light.

Courtney Queeney

Salome

I did not know what I wanted.
Still unused to my new body
and its strange power like gold or land,
I was delivered to my uncle Antipas.

Still unused to my new body,
which stretched out like the morning light
I was borne before my uncle Antipas
and danced as I had been taught to dance.

I stretched my body like the morning light
breaking on the horizon.
I only danced as I had been taught to dance.
The men were merciless; their teeth

broke the two horizons
of their mouths when they laughed.
The men were merciless
but in the end it pleased them.

Their mouths when they laughed
had the darkness of nights alone;
but in the end I pleased them
like the taste of bitter wine.

I had the darkness of nights alone; it
caught the words in my throat
like the taste of bitter wine
and I could not think of anything to ask.

The words caught in my throat
and my mother's was the only familiar face.
I could not think of anything to ask,
so I gave her what I could

because hers was the only familiar face;
the rest were cruel and strange.
I gave her what I could
not understanding what she asked of me.

His face, too, was cruelly strange,
upturned on the platter like a cabbage.
I understood then what she asked of me
was to move my body against him.

The head on the platter like a red cabbage
had eyes which shadowed me.
As I moved my body against Antipas
I willed myself alone and still.

The eyes which shadowed me
ate through the darkness.
I willed myself alone and still,
away from the eyes which reminded me.

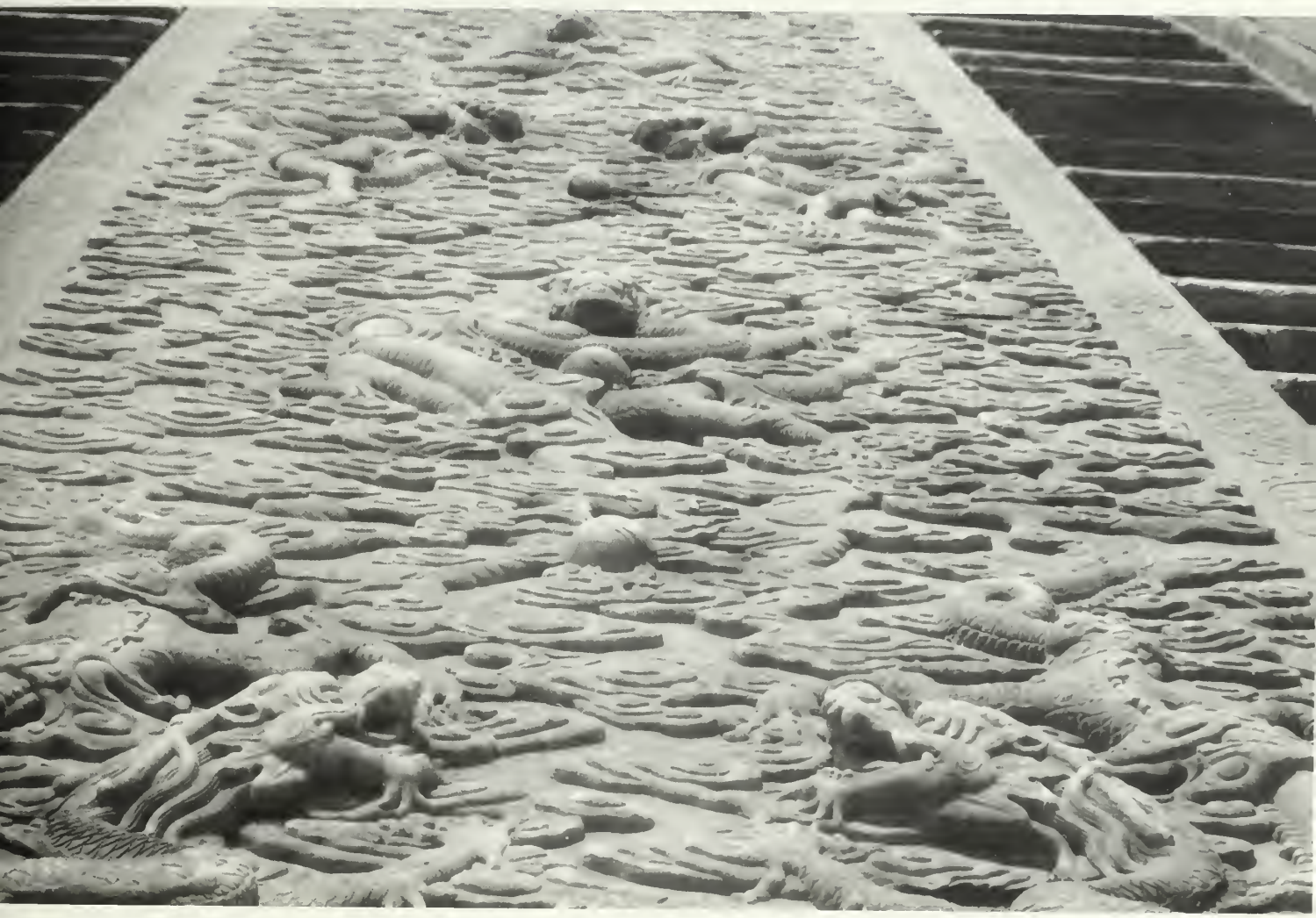
They ate through the darkness.
Even much later when the new body was well used
the eyes still sometimes reminded me:
I did not know what I wanted.

Alexis Blane

the archive

fall issue
two thousand
volume one hundred thirteen
number one

the archive

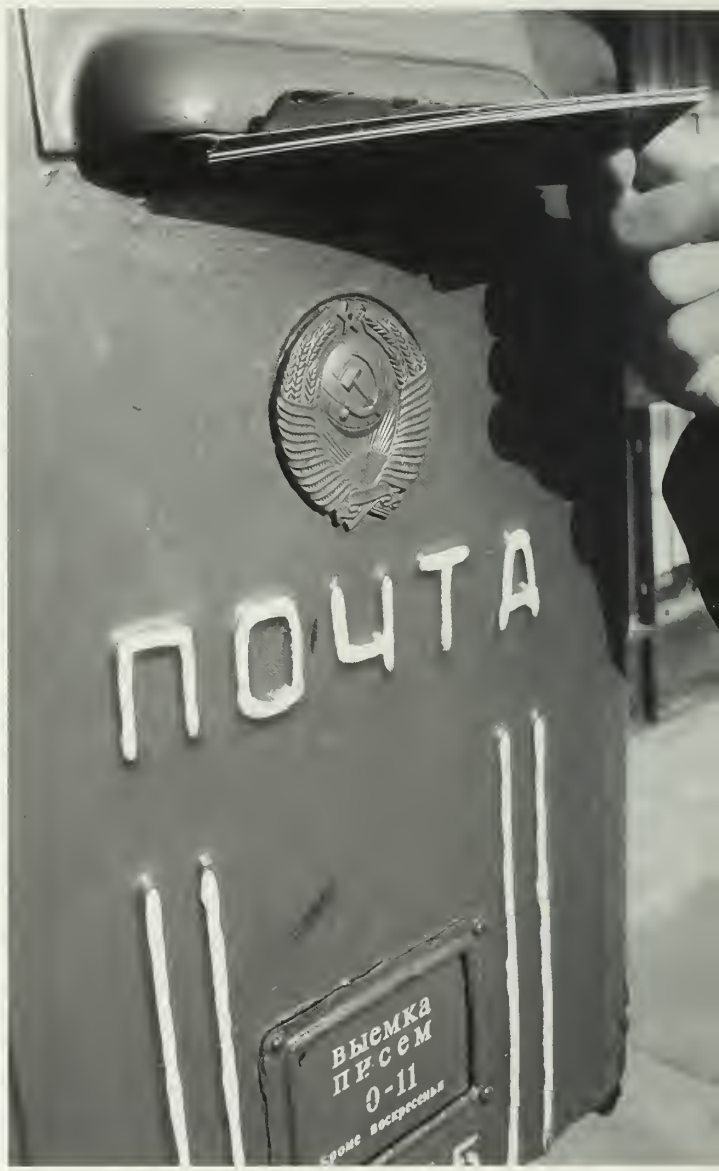


fall issue
two thousand
volume one hundred thirteen
number one

Editor
Alexis Blane

Staff
Kelly Lynn Mulvey
Amy Vyas
Melissa Walker
Katy Wischow

Special Thanks
Jon Uslander
Beverly Meek
Moli Jones and
The Publishing Place



The Archive is a franchised publication authorized by the Duke University Undergraduate Publications Board at Duke University in Durham, North Carolina. The editorial staff will not consider work that has been submitted concurrently to another campus publication. Authorial anonymity is reserved throughout the review process. Correspondence should be addressed to Undergraduate Publications care of the Editor at 101-3 Bryan Center, Duke University, Durham, NC 27708.

contents

poetry and prose

Katherine Thompson	*Peter Pan*	6
Lisa Rying	*This Rome*	7
Ben Morris	*The Speed of Dreams*	8
Holger F. Siebrecht	*Besos Amigables*	11
Carole DeSouza	*tea time in the doll's house*	13
Jennie Berkesch	*the way out*	14
Lee Bullock	*From the Dancer*	14
Amy Vyas	*Afterlife*	15
Roger Pao	*Double Moon*	16
Missy Walker	*To FM Radio and an Antique Car That Still Doesn't Have a Tape Deck*	18
Hannah Star Rogers	*Going Home*	19
Brett Couric	*Durham*	21
Jonas Blank	*Carolina*	21
Katy Wischow	*A Place for a Body in the World*	22
Kelly Lynn Mulvey	*Baking, distracted, while you brood*	25
Katherine Thompson	*This is the Beginning*	27
Terry Schuster	*Kip*	29
Carole DeSouza	*frost spider*	31
Marcia Wong	*dreaming eve*	31
Alexis Blane	*blindsight*	32
Michael Baumrind	*Gibb Industries*	34
Daniel Eiras	*Light Version*	43
Julie Calidonio	*June Bug*	46
Lisa Rying	*Guarding Pisa*	56
Uttama Sharma	*Ancestry*	58
Missy Walker	*Across the blue*	60
Amy Vyas	*Convertible*	61
Alexis Blane	Ani Maamin: *Anna's Verse*	63
Ben Morris	*The Neon and the Sound*	64

Jennie Berkesch

Lily Hayes Kaufman

Nitin Mofwani

Terry Schuster

Peter Pan

Katherine Thompson

think lovely, wonderful thoughts.

remember sewing shadows summer sundays
sun-days seaming
dreaming undone darkness fraying
playing panpipe songs of soapstained shadows
nights of stars and thimble-kisses
blisses shaped like boys
shadowless and craving stories
(music woke the morning glories)
fleeting flight of fairy frisking
risking raids of treasures
pleasures (pixie dust
and pirate gold
and russet ribboned mermaids keeping
seashell secrets)
ever-ever-land of moonlight
junelight lost from mothers
found in brothers
caught in catnaps
yawning soft in beds of rotting roses
forever fledgling, lost to growing pains
and knowing pains, for we would be
for-never ripe with worries, wrinkles
twinkles second star and straight till morning
mourning ever, trapped in never

we wished for old age.

This Rome

Lisa Rying

I do not want this time together to be translated,
into whatever languages I might adopt
through the future cultures of myself
I have yet to photograph and name,
with phonemes that will have the unjust power
to turn your hair from that mahogany red
to some brown. No, I do not want
to become a modern student of the classics
with a mute tongue and memory
unable to speak the words of our history,
constrained to a chair with twenty other students,
slave to the teachings of one who was not even there
himself, one who somehow filters the details of creation
and empires, sculpting our perception
of the action of foreign verbs into something scholastic
and compact. If only I could bypass
the Ghirlandaios and Botticellis who will surely
come in my Renaissance after you—
my rebirth that will slowly adapt the classic view
that I have of you, now, here, in this bed
that gives me the forum to wander like a god
through her Rome, wisely aware of the bodies beneath,
knowing the keen stories along the way
all by the strength of the hegemony of her own tongue,
and her fingers, too luminous with love untainted
by translations between this Latin or the Greek or that English-
if only the Renaissance would not come,
perhaps then this Rome would defy its destiny.
Let me wander, then,
contentedly, if only for this time of my reign,
and let all of this territory be ours
before this Rome becomes a ruin,
falling to the conquest of another age,
falling to another divinity,
falling like folds of clothing to the floor for the last time,
silent and succinctly passionate in the language
that is not for the others to understand.

The Speed of Dreams

Ben Morris

I – the inquisition

For what is Memory?
In tranquil circles it's a comfortable
familiar blanket over the present,
velvet glove over the hands of those who strike you,
glass of wine in a tuesday café.
Stars wither and die, martyrs
illuminating ignorance in the earth,
their lonely death diffusing
into white uncharted lands.

II – she and I

The scissors dance 'round all snicker-snack,
Mimics she creates with the stroke of a blade,
Splaying them out on a table.
Some smile. The greedy ones always smile.
I turn her away and destroy their simpering little faces.

The stairs always scared her.
why are they all squares? the same every one?
It's how they're born, I say.
when we're at the top, where does the last stair go?
She forces me to say nobody knows.
are the first and last stairs lonely with only one playmate?
I don't know, darling. Shall we ask them?

III – the dream of the tree of the dream

The wind rustles the grass,
removing my lightly impressed footsteps
left when I carried you
across the fields to *your tree*,
and the leaves drifted down upon us,
premature jade snowflakes,
our pricked ears absorbing the
ancient songs dreaming above the blades:

IV – in somnis

the red dream
She slips into the blushful allure of a prostitute,
standing on her threshold, beckoning to all –
enter
nobody must know
they enter her coven, dared by the illusion of transience.
they exit her coven, tainted outside permanent in.

the sonic dream
The infernal orchestra stood and bowed,
readied its instruments above each head.
At the conductor's mark a shot was fired
and one body fell limp to the tired wood.
Violas sing and break their strings in glee,
their passion for the dead unparalleled.

the brother's dream
A foot crushing the head invisible –
the younger subdued, defeated,
unable to die.
Laurels fly, angels fly, roaches fly.

the dream of the infant
I am here.
Let me out.
Let me out.

tearfallen dreams
A gentle ringing in the background that
no one heeds. Feet and legs are motionless,
anchoring a torn torso. Arms and necks lie about.
Disorder rules the day, unwashed outside permanent in.

V – et tu

the dream of the rose
Why are you here? Did I tell you to come?
I don't like to remember we always met here.
The garden was too beautiful,
that's why I knew
we would melt.

Even the ivy remembers the first white rose –
Do you have another for me?

shivering dreams
Stop, stop the wind within.
Pull the warmth further down.
A perfect day it is, so perfect!
You, artist, paint this scene.
Remove the wind if you can. I know you can.

Why must you love me still?

dreaming in glass
Light is stronger than darkness,
because one ray of light
pierces the darkness.
I tremble-beg your prism,
stop piercing me. Stop. Please. I pray.

VI – a Sunday drive on a winding road

Keep your hands on the wheel
eyes on the road
and you'll never have an accident.
She smiles because she knows I break the rules.
She knows in seven words or less,
the fruit of an ivy education,
she could undermine my entire premise,
but the windwhip would silence her,
and the trees.

We return to her mother.
She loves me too much to speak.

VII – the speed of dreams

For me:

It's a flying forward of the blacks of your eyes:
Quick, quick, before the dying of the light,
shadows holding you close to
the dream you will never forget,
no matter how desperately you try.

When the black pools of water cry for a victim with
scars from the jagged bricks,
moss-stained hands,
blood on the stone,
innocence lost.
The electric projection of a world collapsing when the
cloak of night descends upon
laugh of the children settles upon
wrath of the ocean wave crashes upon you.

Besos Amigables

Holger F. Siebrecht

uno dos tres
significa one two three
pero en realidad significa otra cosa.
no acuerdo quien lo puso
pero si acuerdo the softness and the gentleness
and that's not normal, is it?
y tengo ganas de andarme por la crueldad de su juego.
Si es un juego. Quiero dudarlo porque
es lo que hagan en España, en la Argentina
uno si
dos tal vez
tres, no.
pero ya no se
maybe it was without anything in the back of her mind
maybe it was with something
durchsichtig but not clear
in the base of her brain
i didn't see any.
uno dos tres
i will find out
i have no doubt.

tea time in the doll's house

Carole DeSouza

prop it up on a broad-backed chair:
where there's a good intention,
there's a nearer future.

pretty walls
round you and me;
pretty small,
pretty walls.

no, not like that,
don't say it like that
(graffiti in my head)
(called childhood)!

a little page for right and wrong,
who will hear her sing this song?

(he took my childhead)

pretty lies
for you and me;

that's not art, that's manic depression:
scandal only depends
on who's looking.

pretty lies
came suddenly.

the way out

Jennie Berkesch

the smoke blue sweet smell
is the only way
i can forget
that of his body
mixed with our sweat, or later
blood, vomit
although i've
never tasted the stench of death
it must feel good
not at all
so nice a rest but no
no i've never met him only this
cruel, because you can't have him
until i can't separate the
two, ah
but this smell is just sweet
relax deep breaths
a breeze the other way
scares his scent away
forgotten but not gone not forgotten

from the dancer

Lee Bullock

My world is tendons screaming out from arms tensed
and bones perched atop shoulders
like parrots with cocked heads:
Polly want a cracker!

Afterlife

Amy Vyas

Everything is important again. The membership at the racquet club that went unused is now being broken in. Tournaments. Pool side cookouts. Locker room banter with men you don't know. A new racquet with a new grip, perfect and calling to you over its extravagant price. Singles matches. Doubles matches. You lose them all. You sign up for private lessons on Saturday mornings with the tennis pro. You get up early, you never miss a lesson. In his Russian accent your instructor says you are getting better, you will be winning soon. It is all very urgent.

You clip coupons. At the supermarket you pick up the flyer inside the door to see what's on sale even though you can afford to buy cucumbers and Hellman's at full price. You need a basket but you pull out a cart. There is nothing to say you can't buy marshmallow Fluff and spareribs now. And you do. But never any TV dinners. That is what she is expecting. At the register you argue with the checkout girl when she doesn't double your coupons. You talk to the manager. "I'm Wes Elliot," you say. He has forgotten your name even before you have said it. He has heard it all before.

The mail is only a trickle. The letters and bills are covered in forwarding stickers. You read all of it. You send away for catalogs. You order a trench coat from Brooks Brothers. The same day it comes you hear from Publishers' Clearing House. If you have the right number, you will win the green Jag.

Even without the Jag you have the nicest car in the apartment complex. You smile at the neighbors and they smile back. Most of them do not speak English. Spanish. Portuguese. You don't know. Before work you jog. It is beginning to show. You are fit. You stride. Women look at you and now you are quick on the tennis courts. The real estate agent who has been showing you houses begins to smile differently at you. You want to move soon, you tell her. Already it has been too long. She says you must not like it, "living where you are living." If you smile, it is because you don't know how to answer her.

At work you take the stairs. You listen to your boss speak in an appalling monotone. You smile. Shake hands. Volunteer for committees. You will be deciding on the caterer for the company holiday party. The vice president's bespectacled secretary is surprised when you greet her by name in the hallway. You wave goodbye to the man who runs the coffee stand in the lobby of your office building. "He knows me," you think. It is a lie.

As you walk down the street in your trench coat you step aside for no one. It is beginning to rain but it does not matter. You have a new lease on life. Later you will admit it was not what you expected. Overpriced. Overrated. An absent landlord who never fixes what's wrong, and the other tenants who wouldn't care enough to talk to you if you hadn't done so first.

The letter arrives. It is in fountain pen. She is twelve but has beautiful handwriting. She is reading *The Scarlet Letter*. You read it your freshman year in college. The lost wife does not matter. The lost daughter does not matter, you tell yourself. It was just a marriage. A marriage you miscarried, or it miscarried you. From across the parking lot a television flashes blue light. You are all right. You are not alone.

Double Moon

Roger Pao

Every so often, a double moon
surfaces on a shore of clouds
encircling my home.
However ample the evidence,
whatever statistics
scientists have accumulated,
I resolve that we have not a solitary
moon, but two.

So all this time, I stand,
viewing my reflection in puddles
during thundershowers,
feeling dissolved, longing to coagulate
before some animal drinks out of me —
last month, I ran after a child,
who appeared to have been myself
as a child, following him down
the important street names of my past

before cornering him against
the building of my old grammar school,
only to discover that the poets
were right: everyday, reasoning,
trying to verify, you never grasp it,
staring at an image so unceasingly real,
though having long convinced
yourself it was not.

To FM Radio and an Antique Car That Still Doesn't Have a Tape Deck

Missy Walker

I am relieved every time I return
to discover this all still here:

my same morning D.J. playing
a few new hits, but all the same
genre, all songs sentimental for the same themes,
the same rhymes, maybe even a
chord progression repeated

like the old(er) song I used to turn up
and sing to at the stoplight en route
to the steady progression of boyfriends' houses.

Two, three . . . five years down the road
I'm the same girl playing on the same sad old theme,
slightly different faces, all the same
genre. Their names cling mysteriously
to the titles of their respective songs:

windows down for the first,
euphemistic "crush," (or obsession) flying over the bridge,
my engine screaming to the dolphins; a hum and murmur
to the tune of a first kiss; volume up, all out,
and the windshield wipers on
for every boy who hurt me.

But every bridge lift has its conclusion,
every traffic light turns, and these things are still here
to wake to in the morning, instead of a buzzer.
I revisit them sometimes, when I can,
because I love to drive and to listen to the radio
out on Pitchkettle Road, and others

that didn't have names before, or at least not signs,
or maybe it was just dark
and my headlights had burned out.
But even that night, walking back to the highway,
the music was the last thing to go.

Going Home

Hannah Star Rogers

All the women I grew up with are sitting
half-naked on the rocks in the sun
we look at each other and
are not ashamed.
—Adrienne Rich

Down by the Riverside—
And not just any creek,
It'll be at Ripville

Where you broke your arm In '72
When I was still an unfertilized Half seed
Long before I would long to place your
Armlets over my ankles
Wishing for strong toes like yours that grip
The rocks
Of a burned house, a fermented husband, and not a single baby.

Toward the end,
Once most of her stomach and esophagus were gone,
After she couldn't see her lamp, distinguish the sounds of Virgil's truck,
Remember the Carmel cake
Or even where the bathroom was,
Where there were no more plastic yellow capsules,
Only blue pills to ease the tremors,
and there was nothing left to say

She would ask,
"Does anybody know my Daddy?
Does anybody know Woodson Harmon?
Can you take me home?"

Durham

Brett Couric

Durham —
Tobacco city
Rough-hewn and hoarse
Hard-core cool
Negro bass
Bulls and Blue Devils
Pizza and sweet tea barbecue.

The person stands
Chillin' an' smokin'
After a tough day
But they're even tougher
And they blow the smoke through their lips all hip
And you've got to awe and respect and like them.

Carolina

Jonas Blank

I remember your mountains
And winding, violent curves
Bilious cataclysms
And tender shores
The ice cracking under the wheels of a convertible
Rain slicking the road
Sticky sweat of the hours
Winnowed away in ocean condominiums
And endless green tobacco
I heard your broken dreams
And mine
Whispered on the steps of a chapel
Repeated from smoke-filled balconies
Drunk and inhaled too quickly to forget
—like seasons
which change while you never will
as the mists of the morning
still evaporate into day
leaving the distant moist memory
of your hands.

A Place for a Body in the World

Katy Wischow

Southern summer can drive you to almost anything. Speeding is the least of it; the rush of air is worth the risk that a cop, growing irritable in the sun-baked cruiser, will catch you. When you open your door in the morning, you weigh an extra twenty pounds in sticky, barging air. You have to carve a place for your body in the world. Cramps hurt worse and everything is a cliché.

This particular summer I was a flop. The heat got to me and I slept as much as I could, wore the same tank top for weeks on end, and dreamed about concussions and a pretty young grad student who would move in aggressively.

"Take responsibility for your life!" echoed through my head whenever I woke up. It was like a line from a lazy jazz song. Mary had said that to me during other flop periods, and I had nodded. To me that meant staking a claim, believing in something. Admitting what you want and why you want it.

I hadn't seen Mary since we kissed one night after watching "The Princess Bride." I might never have kissed back except that she touched my face so gently, with so much wonder, as if she were discovering and loving something truly amazing. When she said she thought she was just rebelling against her mother by kissing a girl, naturally I was disappointed. Naturally I didn't believe her.

"So why, Mary?"

"I believe this. I really do. I'm happy."

If I were to march across the country, what would it be for? What would I believe in so strongly that I would ignore my own impotence? The last thing I heard about Mary was that she was walking from San Francisco to Atlanta and stopping to pray at abortion clinics.

Fantasy: I stand in front of the clinic where Mary is praying and I tell her why I can't love her God and why I have to defend this clinic. We hug. She hasn't given up. I haven't given up.

When I went to bed one of those hot nights, the moon was red. I wouldn't have noticed, because my shades had been closed for nine days, but I could smell the outside even through a window closed against air-conditioning, and I looked. I vowed for the hundredth time to find out what could turn the moon red.

The sky was still reddish in the morning as I lay in bed thinking about my dreams of popsicles and water and fountains. I finally got out of bed to get dressed and I felt a storm coming. I tried to remember the cross-stitch wall-hanging from my grandmother's house. "Red sky at night, sailor's delight; red sky at morning, sailors take warning." Was that right? I'm not a sailor and I have never believed in magic.

And anyway, in this case there was red sky at night and at morning, both delight and warning, and that was about the way it went. When I first stepped out into the heat, I was heading for the drugstore. I wanted to buy some detergent, because I was finally motivated to do laundry. I never made it to the drugstore because on the way I saw Mary.

She looked the same as she had when I kissed her, except vertical. She didn't ever change. Still pale, still thin, still sparkly and beautiful in the oddest way. Still wore dirty jeans. I stopped; I would have stopped for any old friend. Of course, Mary was different, but I still stopped.

Fantasy:

God: You're doing okay.
Me: Thanks.
Me: Can I have your autograph?
Me: You know, if I could ask – I know you don't grant wishes, exactly, but if I could pray – I would pray for a steady voice. I would pray to lose the meanness and craziness and just keep the good stuff. But especially the voice thing.
God: So you wanna be a crusader? Good luck.
Me: Well, if you think it's a good idea…
God: You have a voice, you know.
Me: Yeah. Thanks.
[God and Me embrace]

I drove downtown aimlessly. I had to work in the evening and had nothing to do before my shift. I drove by two houses where friends had lived, I drove past a psychic's roadside sign and thought about stopping, until I saw that she had lace curtains and decided I didn't need a psychic who had lace curtains.

When I got to Broad St. I saw a crowd of people down the block. Traffic crept along, so I had time to see what was happening. It was the Planned Parenthood clinic, and a tiny group of people was walking around the entrance in slow circles. They held up traffic because they had to circle on the sidewalk and they spilled into the street; they couldn't go on the property. A policeman stood there, his face shadowed by his hat. I wondered what he thought, which side he was on, if he cared at all.

When I finally got past the clinic, I drove a block more and then decided to go back. I parked and started walking back toward the clinic. It was crazy. I approached the group, and a member came up to me brandishing a pamphlet, not sure whether I was a friend or an enemy, not sure whether to brandish defensively or warmly. I realized I had never really looked at the people who make fools of themselves in public like this, they were just arms waving and heads bobbing. This one was a woman about 30, dyed blond short and spiky hair, about 5'6". I would pass her on the street and not think twice unless I noticed how cute her smile was. And if I noticed that, I guess I might think twice, but judging from her big square diamond ring, she wouldn't.

"Hi," she said. "Are you here to join us?"

"Nooo…" I said, finally realizing that I didn't have an adequate way to explain myself. She looked at me, waiting. "I guess I just came to watch?"

"Okay, do you want some literature?"

"Sure," I said, taking her pamphlet so I would have something to do. It seemed like standard stuff. "Can I ask you a question?"

"Sure," the woman replied, but she looked suddenly guarded.

I wanted to ask "Do you know Mary?" or something, knowing how ridiculous that was, knowing that I shouldn't project all of my feelings for Mary onto this stranger, knowing that my life was simultaneously disjointed and tremendously concordant. Instead, I asked, "Why are you here?"

I'm sure it's a question she had heard before. She paused but it looked practiced, and she replied "I believe that abortion is wrong. It's against my moral code. It's murder. And I am doing my duty by speaking out against it and sharing my beliefs with others."

"Uh." I really did grunt, just like that. She waited, and I studied the pamphlet, trying to think of a way to explain why I asked that question and why I was there in the first place. When it was clear that I couldn't, I smiled at the woman and she walked back to her group, writing me off as a potential recruit.

It was too hot, I would say later, who stays outside doing anything in weather like this? And what did I want to do there? I don't start fights; it's not in my nature. There was nothing to do, nothing in my power. Nothing to take responsibility *for*, not in weather like this.

Fantasy: Mary touches my face and doesn't give up.

Baking, distracted, while you brood

Kelly Lynn Mulvey

There's an even rhythm to the easy up and down
of the knife cutting through the sharp flesh of the apples.
The wooden cutting board punctuates each cut with a smooth thump
that drowns out the faint clatter of horses and western voices
coming from the room where you take your time.

We make pie, your mom and I,
and talk in masked easy voices.
She asks me about our friends
and my work and family
and we bury our glances toward you,
alone, not needing us,
not wanting our help.

You bandage your wounds with the comfort of your room
and fight away stress with the blue glowing flickers
and we each leave the apples, and each other, once,
to try to offer comfort.

And we each return.
In a way, that is better.
What if you had rejected one,
embraced the other?

We could not shatter the delicate strangeness
of pie-making in your kitchen.
And so the easy swish-thump continued
and your mom stirred in one egg
(I kept quiet, and held onto the rhythm
of ours, not reminding her
that I do not eat eggs)
and I added a bit too much cinnamon,
and she passed me a paper towel to soak up the extra.
We kept the swish-thump going,
compromised on lattice topping
and let our mistakes slide
simply,
silently remembering we were both
thinking of you.

50 minutes later you scooped vanilla ice-cream
and rinsed out the goblets for cider
as I placed the plates and folded napkins
while your mom cut deep slices.
The thump-swish altered slightly.

This is the Beginning

Katherine Thompson

When our children are little they will eat honeydew
and pick strawberries when spring bleeds into
summer. They will mark the beginning
of lemonade weather by strawberry stains
sundried on shirts and sticky feet,
brown—on the tops from the sun, on the soles

from the earth. Their summer souls
will be like this. Imagine, honeydew
breakfasts with children in the morning. Our feet
footsie under the table while hands pat-a-cake into
prayer position and back. Rainbow stains
drip from the prism-hung window, because in the beginning

there was light. And it was a good beginning.
The kids beg for stories and clouds weep the soles
of the stars that cover the stains
wreaked in daylight. A honey-dew
falls as we story the kids into
sleep, and toes curl under feet

as they yawn through the tale of the feat
of the ages. We tell them that in the beginning
there was light and it was fireflies flashing into
the darkness, long before stars or souls,
long before summer suckled honey. Dew
drops to the ground. The grass stains

from freeze tag on size 6x pant-seats match the stains
on their camouflage feet
and I can't bear to wash away either. Honey, do
the dishes in the morning, because now is the beginning
of night. I want you with me, and soft as the soles
of kitten feet you will scamper me into

dreams of afternoons lingering into
tangerines. When the sun stains
the horizon the color of ferriswheels and all the souls
hang still, our children grow. Hurry, their feet
will never be this small again, for this is the beginning.
Cast their barefoot prints in the mud of honeydew

fields, where they run from daylight on carefree feet.
A honeydew moon stains the prints that their soles
stamped into the summer-green grass. This is the beginning.

Kip

Terry Schuster

Some boys, like me, were raised by wolves. And the spirit in our eyes that shines green in the dark cannot be caged like regret. We are savage. And we don't like to take baths, worried that if we were to lose our smells, our parents might not be able to tell us apart.

Some boys were raised by chickens. And their eyes shine only in rebellion. In the dark they run away or call their parents by their first names. I didn't believe in chicken-boys until I saw Kip three years ago. I looked at Kip and I wondered if boys could forget the taste of hope – if trees could forget the taste of rain. I looked at his pale body through a chicken-wire fence. His back was curved like a teardrop – like an egg that will never hatch. And I hated his father for thinking a boy could live in a coop.

There was something in my throat that day, and I barked at Kip through the fence. And I felt it deeper. It was the urge in my chest to bare itself to the sun. The tender dip of my palms that bleeds to climb a tree. But it came out angry – passionate. I barked at his whiteness – at the blood that could not escape it through knee-scrapes. I barked until my throat was sore and raw with the taste of my own blood. And the whole time he stared at me, unmoving, almost delighted. His eyes flashed green and wild, and silent with what I thought was joy, or maybe pain. Kip's father saw us staring at each other and clucked something of disapproval. Our silence disintegrated. And Kip's eyes became flat and plain.

It was that moment three years ago that I knew I didn't know everything in the world.

Kip's father hadn't always clucked. Kip said that when he was younger, his father used to tell stories and answer questions like "Where do belly-buttons come from?"

"Tell me about your father, Kip. What did he do to you?"

"I asked him to fly and he wouldn't."

"Kip, what did he do to you?"

"'If I ask you to, will you fly for me?' I asked, and rested my head on his belly. And I heard his inside-gizzards giggle. 'Cause inside he was a bird or a dragonfly. 'Fly Daddy. Fly like sugar cereal – like a weekend.' And there were these voices, these in-my-head pictures of grass in my father's hair. It was like the outside was inside me, and the world was so unbeautiful unless you could fly. 'Daddy, if I ask you to, will you fly with me? I can fly Daddy. I know I can, because if I couldn't, how could I have smelt the stars? How would I know they taste like pancakes?' And my father lifted me up by my child-ribs, and said maybe I can fly with my grandfather who is an angel now, and whose back reminded me of my back yard, which was too steep for football, but perfect when it snowed. And I could hear peanuts in my father's belly – soft like a bruised peach. 'Daddy I'm eight years old, and I'll never die because that's what I wished for last night. And it came true, Daddy. then that I existed – that I was real. Because I made my father happy.

"Later I would ask him to fly ten times in one day to see what the different blues felt like, but he didn't smile. There were other grown ups around and he was talking to them. 'Fly Daddy,' I said and tugged at his arm. I thought maybe he didn't hear me, so I grabbed his

hand and threw it up in the air to help him fly, and he swung it back across my face.

"'Stop it,' he said. 'You're embarrassing me.' He continued to say something else, but it didn't make sense. It was all clucking. He would raise his arms and point his finger, but everything he said was just clucking. Sometimes it's funny to listen to him cluck and to watch other people talk to him as if he were still human."

"Kip, tell me a story. Tell me about boys like me that live in the wild."

"When I first saw you, I wanted so much to be you," he said. "I wanted to be dark like you. Dirty like you." He looked down, and pulled his knees up in front of him. He started rocking forward and back with his chin on his knees. And his egg-curved spine seemed beautiful. "I ran away," he said. "I went to the mountains for seven days and I sat on the ground in the woods. There was something godly in my throat, like shame, and I dared not make a sound. I thought that maybe I was a cigarette butt, flicked into a patch of grass. A telephone pole growing among trees. And I wondered if I was ugly. But that first night it rained, and I knew that I had roots. There was something in my branches that was not stress. Something in my mind that was not thought. And I wanted it to touch my untanned chest. So I grew green and toward the sun. I grew considerably in seven days. At least that's what they clucked when I came back home. And once I started speaking again, I responded the way boys respond – with honesty. I told them I was a tree growing among telephone poles, and I asked them not to cut me down."

"What did they say?"

"Who knows. It's all just clucking to me."

I smiled and tackled Kip to the ground. I pinned his arms to his sides and poked him in the ribs, and he howled in ticklish pain.

And we wrestled like puppies. Covered in dirt that was the world, we were boys until daylight fell, and nothing remained but our green green eyes.

pinched and dimpled
the obvious bumps us from behind and
breaks through, goes lost into the present
around the corner of hope
and then at the horizon—

over the top.

what can I say?

you are pronounced by me
precisely late but fine
and tuned in I seem to you

as sturdy as an apple tree,
hungry for pie and wary of morning.

I beg you, please little man,
put down your fife.

what difference is a degree or two of
daylight when it comes to the crumbling
of a spell? and the mystery is pulled away
with the make-shift curtain—
or else, redirected.

redirect your funny little tune, please.
do not waste it on me.

frost spider

Carole DeSouza

dreaming eve

Marcia Wong

before being born dreaming
of the world she would inhabit
the children she would bear

poor woman
if only she could hear
the whispers of ghost
in her memory

if only
she remembered
that the whirlpool
that was the world
would
suck her
into
night.

blindsight

Alexis Blane

waking to white walls i dream
blood colors, fragments
of bone
i cradle your quick eyes
in the palm of my hand
to trade: two uprooted bulbs
against your whole body
they stain my hands
russet and crimson
i find i cannot
let go
they root in my hand
slip-sunk
into the furrows
and bear sight of my hand

with a touch
i see you
you: side-slumped
on a smooth floor
fetal
awaiting birth
kneeling for
rebirth
the holy men were also alone
with their visions
but you are not wholly
alone
i keep unearthing you
sweat scent, sepia of your irises
in old portraits
of severe women
i keep seeing you
when i touch smooth surfaces of wood
when i pass my hand
through the flame
of a candle (through
the darkness
at the center of the flame
(through pale
gory heat))
but
now when
i open my eyes
there are a hundred gone
ashy mandalas in human poses
like chary clouds
against the redsky of morning
or night
the same
unreality
on either side of the moon
and i half crouched
clenching gory hands
against the pallid light
am sleep-slow
an aborted flailing angel
as you slide
away
into the naked room

Gibb Industries

Michael Baumrind

I used to smoke weed. That's how I got started selling it myself. I, like everyone else I knew, hated those slimy dealers who you never could trust, the ones with the high prices and big friends. So I started buying in bulk from distributors instead of dealers. Distributors only sell in large measures, and surprisingly, they're much more pleasant to do business with, probably because they understand that it is a business, not just selling marijuana. With that amount of week, though, I had no choice but to divvy it up for my friends, not making any money of course, just friendly altruism. But when I saw how easy it was to sell to friends, I started selling to others, and for profit. It paid for the weed I was smoking, and it wasn't more than a month later when I realized it could also pay for a new television, a trendy wardrobe, and a vintage copy of Darwin's *On the Origin of Species*. But better than that, I started feeling like a celebrity on campus. The only investment I had to make was a cell phone and a little word of mouth. I remember the first ads I put up around campus.

"Sphigenni Got You Down" (Sphigenni was the only weed connection on campus at the time.) "Call Gibb Industries, We'd help you out." Only the "We'd" was written in green letter and stood out. Not only did it get my point across, but it made me, Gilbert O'Connell, look like an organized group of people, and organization (even feigned organization) is what customers love. It was amazing the calls I got. That first week alone, I had about twenty orders, which I filled with ease. But I was careless and fearless, and it was only a matter of time until Sphigenni called me.

"Gilbert!" Sphigenni's voice was raspy. I recognized it from those desperate weekends freshman year when I had no choice but to call him. But I still pretended.

"Who's this?"

"You know damn well who this is! What the hell am I supposed to do here? I'm trying to run a business!"

I couldn't resist, "Sphigenni? Oh it's you Sphigenni?"

"Shut the fuck up."

"Look, Sphigenni," I just loved saying his name. "You're not really running a business, you're controlling a monopoly. Besides, what's wrong with a little competition? It is a free country."

I wasn't scared of him. He was three inches shorter than I was, which put him at about five five, and scrawny as hell.

"Gilbert, if you don't quit selling on campus, I'll have your balls up your throat and your weed in your ass."

Poor Sphigenni. He broke one of the only rules in pot dealing I can think of, Never mention weed over the phone. That could really get someone in trouble if he isn't careful. I told him not to worry, and that I had about thirty steady clients and was comfortable with that amount. I got him to agree to a deal where he promised to lay off my back, and I promised to stop selling to those I didn't already know. I lied.

But then so did all my new clients. They told Sphigenni they were quitting pot for a while, and then they called me and I gave them deals that couldn't resist. The power of pleasing so many hungry stoners was much greater than the high I got from smoking myself. I didn't make a conscious effort to quit smoking but I quit nonetheless. Besides, I still had my Kamel Reds to smoke, and that suited me just fine, seeing as the number of clients jumped from thirty to fifty by the end of the first month. When finals came around, my business was

hardly affected by exams. I was dealing marijuana to nearly sixty clients, making a real name for myself, and the whole time dodging Sphigenni and campus authority.

Early on, though, I broke one of those sacred weed rules I was talking about, the one that warns never to have relationships of any kind with your clients. But the first time Milena Crawford bought from me, I know I was in for it. It was about a month after I had put up the Sphigenni signs, early my sophomore year. I was right outside the student center smoking a cigarette and reading *The Moral Animal* by Robert Wright. It was one of those "academic" books I used to read, partly for pleasure and partly to feel smart. Hell, I can even remember the passage I was on when she called my cell phone. It was about monogamy in the lesser apes, I think, or maybe aggression.

She was so confident on the phone. "Hey, is this Gibb?"

"It's me!" I said, I kind of thought it was Sarie, because she always called me midweek for a bag. But I never say my clients' names on the phone.

"I was hoping you could help me out." It didn't sound much like Sarie at that point.

"Well," I was so nonchalant back then. "I have one package good for a buck, or you could take half of it for sixty." She was quiet. "Hello?" For a second, I must admit, my heart fell two inches from my balls. I thought for sure she was some undercover cop, though, really, that would never happen. But I don't show my weaknesses, and I started up again, "Look, if you're interested, why don't we meet at the–" Before I could get my words out, I realized who that girl over by the trashcan was. She was talking on a cell and looking surprised.

"Is that you right there?" I asked the girl on the phone. The girl by the trashcan nodded.

With my sunglasses on my head to look cool, I approached her.

"Boy, that was kind of weird." She said. "What are the chances you'd be right there?"

To this day, I still insist she knew where I was when she called me. I didn't recognize her right away, but she insists to this day that we had a class together my freshman year. We both could insist all we wanted. It didn't much matter, because when I saw her, and I don't usually buy into this shit, I fell in love immediately.

"How bout we go around back?" I gestured to the wooded area behind the student center, and she smiled. I struck up a conversation, "What coincidence! I mean, I could have been anywhere on campus when you called." My college campus was huge though the student population was small. The one thing I remember from the tour I took of my university when I was in high school was that it was the third largest campus in the United States, behind some rural school in Georgia, and one of those state schools in California. Well, that and the campus was very liberal.

I don't remember much about the rest of that day, I mean the day I met her. I remember she was wearing a bluish bandana on her head. And I remember how she articulated her name, with squeezed lips at the beginning, a protruding tongue in the middle, and a wide mouth at the end, "Milena." It was an unusual name, so I felt justified in asking her to repeat it. But, honestly, I had it locked in my memory the first time she told me.

The rest of our relationship happened quite fast. She called a week later for more weed, and that time I delivered it to her door. She was living in a dorm on the north side of campus with some girl named Carrie, whom I never grew to like. Milena initiated the relationship, actually. It was on that second transaction when she asked if I wanted to smoke with her.

"I'm sorry, Milena, I quit smoking pot. And besides, it's not good to mix business with

pleasure." Milena frowned, took the thick bag of weed and shoved it back in my hand. I have never before and never since been taken by a woman, but that's exactly what happened. And as she kissed me forcefully, and as my own hand clinched a bag of weed, my other hand wrapped naturally around her back. And I spoke against her lips. "So," I mumbled, "So I guess this means no more business between the two of us."

Milena actually quit smoking pot too. I was surprised because truthfully, I would never quit anything for someone else, only for myself. But she didn't like it all that much in the first place. And before long, she became not only the best damn girlfriend a boy could ask for, but an amazing entrepreneur of sorts and my trusty business companion. Ultimately, I guess we did mix business with pleasure, but, hell, those were just rules meant to be broken anyway.

In the time I knew her, Milena really changed me. She got me listening to U2 again, and taught me how to double my wardrobe by wearing clothes inside-out. She was also much healthier than I was and it rubbed off on me a bit, though she never could get me to quit smoking cigarettes. Once, while we were throwing the frisbee outside her dorm, she told me she was going to start smoking herself. She threw the disc way off into the distance, and by the time I came back from retrieving it, she had one of my Kamel Reds in her mouth.

"You can't start smoking." I told her.

"Why not, you do it!" She said, and smiled.

"No, I mean not yet." While I had left my cigarettes on the ground by our jackets, the lighter was in my pocket. Her crafty ploy had been thwarted, and I reminded her that I don't quit for other people, not even if my girlfriends threatens to start smoking too.

In business, with Milena by my side, we were unstoppable. She had an uncanny sense of who the stoners were, and we got clients that would never have considered buying from Sphigenni. From budding weed-addicts, to long-time smokers to even members of the faculty. I actually sold to my Physics professor once. It was quite amazing, actually, I just turned the bag of weed in along with the finished exam, and when he returned it to me a week after, there was a big fat A at the top and a fifty dollar bill attached to the midle pages. And that was one of the many clients Milena found.

Most of all, I loved her business ethic. She called it "business savvy," but whatever it was, it worked amazingly. We never overcharged people, always allowed them to weight the doob out themselves. We even started a frequent buyer club like they have at Subway, called it the Green Card, only instead of a free six inch, my customers would receive free weed. Incentives are crucial to repeat customers.

I just turned the bag of weed in along with the finished exam.

Business was soaring, profits were rolling in, we were treating people right, and falling deeper in love. By spring of junior year, Gibb Industries changed its name and its posters around campus.

"Gibb and Mili, a Joint Venture." Only by this point, the signs for our business had to be more subtly placed, seeing as our services were becoming more in demand. But the spring of my junior year was the spring of Milena's senior (older women always intrigued me). We pretended not to think much of it, squeezing all the life out of the days we had left together, for come that May, Milena would be heading to Egypt for an unspecified amount of time. (Incidentally, she wasn't Egyptian though she did have dark skin, dark hair, and the darkest of eyes. She was an American through and

through, but had gotten a job doing archaeological research at a place called Abydos right on the Nile.) In our last semester together, we watched our brain-child, the marijuana business we created, grow and flourish. We would sit in the campus café and talk about evolution or an idea for glow-in-the-dark playing cards, and without fail, we'd bump into one of our clients there.

I used to walk around campus junior year just to see all the people to whom we brought pleasure. There was Ty, the blond-haired, blue-eyed saint who looked nothing like a stoner, but bought more than any other client. He was very athletic, and when I'd see him run by on campus, he'd either give me a thumbs up or a thumbs down, depending on whether he was running high or not. And then the Sigma Chi guys, the "religious freaks," as Milean called them, but they smoked like fiends. And I can't tell you the number of organizations on campus whose president bought weed (presumably with university funds and presumably for the university organization.) I sold to band members, sorority chicks, fifteen members of the janitorial staff, nearly all of the baseball team, professors, English majors, gays, you name 'em, Mili and I got 'em high. And they all loved us for it.

As for my life, things were going pretty well. Mili and I had our own group of friends, all of whom smoked (except for the two of us). There was Johnny (whose real name was something in Chinese we couldn't pronounce), and Clarence, the cool kid who ended up winning the election for Student government on a platform of "Judiciary Reform," whatever that mean. There was Sandra with her guitar and, god bless her, a voice that could kill a cat or neuter a dog. Rob and Stan, and sometimes Crista if she wasn't too busy fucking that fat boyfriend of hers. And none of them ever paid for their weed. How could they, they were friends of Gibb and Mili.

But one afternoon my junior year, when Milena and I were making out in my apartment, someone started pounding on my door. Even now, I'm sure pounding on my door would make me jump for cover fearing the police, but when I was dealing it was especially bad. So as Milena grabbed for her clothes, I peered through the peephole.

Without so much as a hesitation, and not even waiting for Milena to button her blouse, I opened the door and turned to Mili. "It's just Sphigenni!" I said as I pulled the door open, "He's harmless."

Sphigenni was harmless, that's true. But his fraternity brother Carlton was a different story. And so was James, and Matthews, and Turner, and whoever else he had brought with him. I sure as hell got the shit beat out of me, right then and there on my own doorstep, and right in front of Milena. I think she cried while they beat me, but I was relentless with my Gibb grin, keeping it on the whole damn time, for her sake.

I guess that was my cue to get out of the marijuana business. I had all of Kappa Theta or Pi Omega or whatever they called themselves threatening to rearrange my genitalia, and proving that they could do it. But I was stubborn, and didn't want to quit dealing unless I made the decision. I wasn't bound to let Sphigenni make me stop. Milena knew this about me as she iced down my bruises and told me how I had to keep to my work. With my head in her lap, she made everything better.

"You're doing a good thing, Gibb, you're keeping prices low and making a whole lotta people happy." She dabbed my forehead with a wet rag, "Besides, I have an idea."

I sat up, and Milena talked away. She was brilliant. The rest of that afternoon and all night, I was passed out on my couch from exhaustion. That whole time, Milena stayed in the kitchen concocting a clear liquid which

she put in twenty separate jars she had collected from the recycling bin.

Early the next morning, I think it was a Saturday, I showed up at Sphigenni's fraternity house. It was located off Hamilton, which was on the south side of campus. My eyes were puffy but I wore my sunglasses over them to look cool. I had a bandage over my chin but other than that, I looked pretty good for having been beaten nastily the day before. Some guy answered the door wearing a wife-beater and smelling of sweat.

"Gibb?"

"Johnson, what's up!" It was Johnson. He had bought from me once or twice recently but for obvious reasons, he had to buy primarily from Sphigenni. I asked him where Sphigenni was, and he warned me to stay away, but said he was in the Commons. I wasn't scared then either seeing as everyone but Johnson was passed out. Still, it was like I was some enemy walking right up to the leader of the opposition, with nothing but a bag of weed, a jar labeled strawberry rhubarb, and a good idea.

Sphigenni was sleeping on a couch in the Commons. He was still wearing the same thing he had been wearing when his brothers beat the shit out of me, but he was missing one shoe and sleeping like a baby. I tell you, I stood over that snoring bastard for at least five minutes. I was scared then, I admit it. I knew that all around me were passed, angry frat boys, any of whom would jump at the chance to beat someone again, especially and "enemy." There was some kid with a pillow over his head passed out on the floor by the couch, and in the corner, two frat boys nestled close to each other (I always did question their "brotherly love," but now was not the time for wise cracks. Any sudden movement could wake those schmucks up, and I was still hurting.)

"Hey Sphigenni," I finally said. He mumbled and turned over the face the back of the couch. His black hair kind of stuck to a pillow for a bit, then let loose. "Hey, buddy, wake up." It wasn't much more than a whisper, but he shot up and mumbled seomthing about a car and guy named Desmond. Then he came to his senses.

"What the fuck are you doing here?" Sphigenni wiped a bit of drool from his chin, and squinted his black eyes.

"I brought his for you." I handed him the bag of weed, a full ounce and it was in one of those extra small snack bags, the ones for either an elementary school kid's carrots or a dealer's drugs.

"I don't want your fucking weed."

"It's not weed, open it." He opened the bag and took a long sniff.

"It sure as hell smells like weed." He said with a half grin, half grimace.

This is where I had to envision Milena there, to help me pull it off. See, Sphigenni was partly right. The bag did smell like weed, but only because Mili, as she told me, figured out a way of extracting just the scent and none of the drug. She used some elaborate system adding Egyptian cement thinner, water, oil, and marijuana. Then she strained the doob, and was left with, as I explained to Sphigenni, "Strawberry Rhubarb." I pulled out a jar on which those words were written. The cap was screwed on tihgt, and through the glass was a clearish liquid. "Smell this."

He dropped the bag of weed in his lap and unscrewed the cap of the glass jar. Sphigenni took a long whiff, and his whole body quivered. Now he was awake. "What the fuck is that shit?"

"What does it smell like?" I really wanted to call him "bastard" right then, like "What does it smell like to you, bastard!" but Milena warned me of my language. "That, my friend, is pure THC." I said instead. Our plan was beginning to work, I could see it in Sphigenni's

eyes. He was bound to want the rhubarb jar and the pickle jar, and the several other containers Milena had filled with her concoction which all waited for him just outside. The greatest thing is, he didn't even think that it could be just a scent.

I sat down next to Sphigenni on the couch and for a moment I kind of liked the kid. I saw his eyes light up as he turned the jar over in his hand. He was like a little child, and he looked like one too. One shoe missing, his hair all full of sleep, little striped lines across his face from where he'd been lying. And I liked calling him my friend, for some reason. But the feelings passed quite quickly when one of the big boys from the day before stumbled down the stairs in the other room. Sphigenni could sense my flinch, and without looking up from the rhubarb jar he said, "Don't worry, Gibb, he's harmless right now." On that cue, the stumbling frat boy vomited and collapsed in a corner at the base of the stairs.

"So this is how you're doing it?" Sphigenni was intrigued and hung over. His mouth was dry and clicked every time he spoke. "This is how you've been putting me out of business."

"That's how I've been doing it." I couldn't resist putting on my Gibb grin.

"Where did you get this shit." He handed the jar back to me hesitantly, and licked his dry lips.

"I made it. In the lab." I lied.

"What's in the bag?" Sphigenni held up the Ziploc snack bag.

"Some powerful shit. I call it Crushed Vegetable Medley. Some broccoli, oregano, tobacco." I don't think he was listening to me then, his hands and eyes were fooling around in the Ziploc bag. I kept talking anyway, "With the Doob Juice, you just dab a little on anything, roll it up, and smoke it. It could be shit for all you'd care, you'd still get fucked up. And the greatest thing—"

"It's sticky." He pressed his fingers together.

"Like Kind Bud."

"It smells good." He sniffed his fingers.

"Like Kind Bud."

"How much is it?"

"That's the thing," I told him, "You could sell it for 200 an ounce, it's that good. Pure THC on anything could fuck you up for hours. But the greatest part, it costs you about ten bucks for the THC, and about another ten for the vegetables."

So here's where I must be honest. That bag of vegetable matter I was giving him wasn't actually vegetables at all. I knew he would try out the weed juice before buying it, so I made sure he'd get high off the bag I brought over. I didn't give him a bag of Vegetable Medley. In fact, I'm not even sure that would look like weed. Instead, I gave him an ounce of my finest shit, from California's Emerald Triangle. It hurt a bit parting with that, since I knew it could bring in more than 200 bucks, but it was all in the name of fun and fucking up the enemy. But it was a wise decision, because before I knew it, he had packed a bowl and was smoking at fucking ten o'clock in the morning.

"So what's the story, Gibb? How much you selling this shit for?" He put down his pipe and grabbed the strawberry rhubarb jar back from me.

"I'm not."

"You fucker, why the fuck would you—"

"I'm giving it to you." He stopped and looked down at the jar in his right hand and the bag in his left. I could tell he was feeling high, so I started my spiel. "Kind of a truce, and after this I'll sell you the Doob Juice, as I call it, for no more than the cost of the chemicals." Hook, line and sinker! Now I just has to reel that poor sap in. "There's only one catch."

"What's that."

"You can't tell anyone you got this from me. No one."

"What the fuck you think I am, some sort

of Narc?"

"I'm just saying, keep the juice a secret, make your own weed get high with your friends, sell it, but don't tell them about the juice. And don't talk to me about it, either."

"No problem man." And we shook hands. I had almost convinced myself that the strawberry rhubarb jar really did contain pure THC. I guess I was a better actor than I thought. I left him a notecard on which Milena had written the correct proportions of Doob Juice to Vegetable Medley, and I encouraged him to start selling it as fast as possible. He was stoned, and I had fucked him over for sure.

Then I stepped over the guy passed out near the couch, walked out the door exiting the frat house, and said goodbye to Johnson who was sitting in a rocking chair on the porch chewing tobacco and spitting in an empty beer can.

I wish I could tell you exactly what happened after that, but I don't really know. Shortly after I left Sphigenni's place, and parted with about twenty bottles of Doob Juice, I noticed a drop in the amount of people calling me for weed. I figured that after the thorough embarrassment I caused him, Sphigenni must have lowered his prices if he wanted to make any sales. He even invested in a new ad campaign which, really, was just a copy of my style. "Sphigenni and Associates," it read, "A Real Deal." But come on, that can't even compare to the "We'd help you out," which made me famous around campus. I attributed my drop in sales to Sphigenni lowering his prices and less people smoking weed in general.

But after I dicked Sphigenni over, I kind of lost interest in selling and maybe that was why sales went down. By the end of the semester, Mili and I were selling so little weed, that I started thinking about my life after Milena would leave. With twenty die-hard clients left and the emerging reality about the end of Milena and Gibb for God-only-knows-how-long, the two of us made a decision that changed my life. It happened in a café called Jittery Joe's about a block from my artment.

We were drinking these awesome chai teas that Mili had introduced me to and talking around the subject of what was going to happen in a little more than three weeks.

"I saw Ty today." She said, and took a sip.

"He's sober now, I gather?" Milena kind of smiled with her lips on the mug. I added, "No thumbs up recently."

"Hmm." Pulling her mouth away she said, "You know I've been meaning to ask you, have you seen my blue bandana. I think I left it at your place, or else I lost it for sure."

I reached in my pocket and pulled it out.

"I love you." She said, and shocked the shit out of me. I mean, sure we loved each other, but it wasn't our thing to say it out loud. The whole "going to Egypt" thing was getting to her, I could tell. She leaned over the table and kissed me, a little peck. And then "going to Egypt" started getting to me too.

"Milena," I had to be careful, you know, girls get all weird when you start talking seriously. "Milena, I had a thought." something in her brown eyes gave me the impression she though I was broaching the subject of love. Boy was she off. "What with the lack of stoners on campus, I mean even Ty's cutting back, I was thinking, maybe we should get out of the business. It was fun for awhile, we screwed Sphigenni over enough, and I'm sure his embarrassment over the whole Doob Juice thing will keep him out of my hair for a long time. I mean, I keep thinking how pissed off his brothers were when they smoked vegetables." I laughed a bit, "So what the hell, we're kind of done. We've won and now we can quit."

"You really think you want to do that?" She said and gulped down the rest of her tea.

"How the hell'd you drink so fast!"

"Oh, Gibb, when you get talking, you just don't stop." She stroked my cheek, "I find it endearing!" and she laughed a bit, which in Mili's way means "I love you." (Though evidently so do the actual words, "I love you," but that was new to me.)

I shrugged off her affection to get back to business. "So what do you say to ending the Joint Venture?"

"Well," She looked off to space, and I though I saw a bit of a smile, or at least a little dimple forming. "It was your business to start with, so it's yours to finish." She hesitated, and

My God, I've never seen a hippy chick become so much of a girl all at once.

then said, "You know Gibb, I'm leaving soon anyway, and" I breathed right then, a little too loud, and she definitely noticed, "and, well, I can't help you on your dealings when I'm on the coast of the Nile!"

"Mili, that brings me to another issue." Now at this point, I have no diea what came over me. Maybe it was the way her ponytail rested on her shoulder, or the way she picked at her nails. But memories of Mili and Gibb just shot through my head, and before I knew what had hit me, I had said it, plain and simple. My God, I've never seen a hippie chick become so much of a girl all at once. She was dripping all over the place, and to my surprise, she even cried, saying "I love you too." We left Jittery Joe's and walked back to my place, where we fucked like rabbits. Well, fine we didn't fuck. Milena and I "made love," and lots of it. She found the Gilbert in Gibb O'Connell, and for the rest of that semester, and the rest of my life, Gilbert O'Connell hasn't bought or sold or smoked even so much as a gram of weed.

Well that's not entirely true. The day I took Milena to the airport, we decided that the emotional catastrophe that was upon us was just too great for our sober minds, so Johnny rolled us a joint from shit he bought from, you guessed it, Sphigenni. And for the first time since that day I delivered weed to Milena's dorm, Milena got high, and for the first time since, gosh, sophomore year, I got high too. And for the first time ever, we were stoned together.

It was amazing. With time all distorted, we kept finding ourselves closer and closer to her gate. At some point, I remember eating one of those cinnamon rolls they sell, and, oh yeah, we definitely had a run-in with the bathroom. I heard screaming and shouting, and even laughter, from the women's restroom, and ran in to find the sink spurting water everywhere. "Only when you're high!" Milena said laughing and holding her hands out to block the water. "Only when you're high," I said, and we dried her off as best we could.

And then we were in a magazine stand, and then she was crying, and I was holding her, and then we were laughing at some old lady's growth on her neck, and then we were at the gate, and then she was gone.

I left the airport still smiling, not a tear in my eye. But the good thing is, I was sure she was smiling on board that plane too. She had given me a letter and told me to wait until I was sober to read it, but I couldn't resist and found my stoned ass sitting outside the airport, smoking a cigarette and reading the last "Mil and Arrestedment of Milena Crawford," as she called it.

The letter was put together like a prisoner's file, pictures o her in a black and white striped outfit, front and profile, on a background of height measurements. It didn't mean anything, except to make me laugh, which it did. In the letter, she encouraged me to quit smoking "those damn Kamel

Reds." And she had included a map which she had drawn, and which I later followed to find our frisbee she buried. And she told me how she had fallen in love with me. She said how if we were meant to be together, then we'd be together, and she wrote "we'd" in thick green letters. Milena even suggested me coming to Egypt (because the Sinai supposedly had the best hashish, and it was decriminalized there.) But, I'll tell you, I was surprised as hell when I read about the Doob Juice.

Remember when I was passed out after my beating? Well, that whole time Milena was in my kitchen, and mother fucker, she actually made real, pure THC, not just a good scent. She convinced me we were dicking Sphigenni over, but what we were actually doing was handing him our business. That explained why Sphigenni never bothered me again, and why my clients slowly dwindled. Maybe the old Gibb O'Connell would have gotten all riled up by reading that letter, but I didn't. Sitting there high as a kite outside the airport, I laughed, and heard the planes fly overhead. I always knew she was a genius. I admit I did think about the fortune we could have made if the Joint Venture hadn't gone defunct, but we were never really in it for the money anyway.

The sweetest thing about Mili, she cared for me. She wanted my life to go another direction. Yeah, it was fun, dealing weed and being Gibb of Gibb Industries, and then of Gibb and Mili. I had a blast, but it was time for me to stop, and Mili knew that. So that brilliant girl found a way of getting me to want to quit on my own. And like I said, I never quit for anyone but myself. She knew that. God I miss that girl. I wonder how the Nile is treating her. I wonder if I still love her, or if I ever did.

You know, I quit cigarettes about two months ago. So now, I don't smoke, anything.

Light Version

Daniel Eiras

Always

to the sun the arms reach
in hopes that
life will
t r a n s f o r m
the little tree leaves

the little angles

soaring
halfway from Heaven
to raspberries
in suckling flavor
ooh, the gluttony
of the sweet per
fu
me
s
into the senses of

(deep abyss)
where light to Light
turns to windowglass
turns to windowglass

shatter i n g

like the doves above in flight
extracting the juices from an apple (golden)

and parlaying into the life that hopefully
(hopefully)
will transform
to the *littleangels*
Transform
to the suckling flavor
trans*form*

into the windowglass reflecting the breeze in the leaves

from Heavenward.

June Bug

Julie Calidonio

"I used to think I could catch being a retard," she said. She was a carrot top, aged eight years, with knobby knees and pasty white skin. His niece looked kind of like her father, only she had more hair and less gumption, Zach thought. She had a scab on her elbow that she picked while she talked to him. She peeled back a small corner of the scab. The skin was red and raw underneath, light pink in the center. She glanced up and saw him watching her. She turned toward him. Perhaps she was nervous because she didn't quite remember him. They were sitting on a green park bench at Eisenhower Park across from Grover Hospital. In front of them stood a rickety playground made of the kind of coarse rough wood that gives you splinters if you run your hand down it the wrong way. The two kids still romped about on it, in the manner that all kids seem to do, oblivious to the threat. One looked bloated and his pants didn't fit quite right, a little tight in the crotch. While recklessly spinning he tripped over his untied shoelace and then dizzily attempted to climb onto the monkey bars. The other just looked odd and out of place. And then he remembered her comment. Kids are so strange, he thought. You can't catch mental retardation.

Just then bloated boy stumbled from the top of the monkey bars. His mother scurried over and grabbed his hand. "Don't do such things," she yelled to him, "you'll get hurt." She pursed her lips and looked like she was contemplating slapping his rear but decided against it. Instead she just tugged him towards the exit. This left only one little boy left floundering about on the wooden playground. He wore a Superman shirt that had faded ten washes ago. He had a round chubby looking face, with slits on the corners of his eyes, and his tongue hanging half way out of his mouth like it didn't quite fit in. His mother or nanny was sitting on a swing reading a book and telling him to be a good boy and not to eat the bugs. The little girl studied him and started twirling her hair. She wondered if he had a hole in his sock like she had in hers. She repeated herself; "I used to think I could catch being a retard."

"And how did you think you could catch it," he said. He wasn't really interested in making conversation, but he did anyway. On the bench, his body towered over her. Aware of this, he spread out his long legs and scrunched his back a bit, getting closer to her level. She sat erect and alert. He looked at her and tried to recall how she had changed, but he couldn't quite remember. The last time he had seen her had been at her birthday three years ago. His brother had called him and begged him to come. He said it was important to have all his family with her. Zach didn't really notice her then, or rather, he just didn't seem to pay any attention to her. He wasn't the type of person that did. She was just kind of there, like their new roof and Chevy. "Well, from the wall of course," she interjected as she wrinkled her nose at him, like she knew she was interrupting his thought. "Well, mostly from the retards," she added.

"How is that?"

"Well, if I was to lick their fruit wallpaper."

"Fruit wall-paper?"

"Yeah, fruit wallpaper. They had it in their room. You see, our classroom was next to theirs and for recess we had to walk through it." She was trying to act more like an adult now, so she threw back her head and looked at him intently. "The first time I walked through it I noticed their fruit wall paper. You

know like the kind they had in Willie Wonka."

She is so odd, he thought, one day she thinks she can catch retardation and the next she is sitting talking to me like she is a young lady, all grown up at age eight. "And why would you lick it?" he asked.

"Well, I couldn't lick it because they licked it. And if I licked it I would catch it."

"Well, why would anyone lick it?"

"Well, to taste it of course. I could tell the retards licked it a lot because their tongues hung out of their mouths all the time. And every time I passed, I would see them standing by the wall with their tongues hanging out. I wanted to lick it too, but I didn't wanna catch it," she said, seeming more childish again as she started swinging her feet underneath her. Her laces weren't tied and they made an annoying clicking noise each time they scraped against the ground. Schh...Schh...Schh. She didn't seem to notice.

"Why did you think the paper would taste like fruit?" he asked and he reminded himself to tell her later that retards are not called retards in public. Children don't know much, he thought, wallpaper obviously isn't flavored. It is just paper. And you shouldn't have to lick it to find that out and shoelaces should be tied. But then, as he noticed her red hair bouncing against her innocent face with the movement of her feet, he remembered how he used to think that all redheads smelt like strawberries and about his disappointment when he realized they didn't.

"Well, in Willie Wonka and the Chocolate Factory, their fruit wallpaper tasted like apples and oranges, and the retards obviously liked it." She was acting like an adult again, her eyes wide and alert, back arched and legs resting calmly beneath her, she continued, "From the first time I saw it, I wanted to lick it, but I knew better and then one day I licked it. And I sat waiting for my tongue to get big and hang out of my mouth, but nothing happened."

"So you were all worried for nothing," he said and he smiled at the idea of her thinking her tongue would just magically not fit in her mouth. Kids don't know much that is for certain. But what they did know they knew with a naive surety that he couldn't quite laugh at. He felt embarrassed that he almost did.

"Yeah," she nodded in an attempted stoicism. He could see that she might cry. He hoped she didn't. He can't stand crying kids and he knew she was gonna cry when she found out why he had brought her there. Her eyes met his, her nose running. He resisted an urge to lean over and wipe it with the back of his hand. She said, "Uncle Zatch, do you think it is the same now, that I am worrying about them for nothing and that nothing will happen and they will be home when I get there and there won't have been an accident."

He didn't know what to say to her and he didn't want to tell her that they were dead, so he sat back and watched the plump handicapped kid trying to build sandcastles out of dirt. Every time he got a good clump of it together, and started forming a good mound he'd clumsily kick it with his foot or knock it over with his hand. Finally, he got a little mound to stay long enough for him to sit back and admire it. Just then, his nanny or mother or who ever came along, stepped on his mound with her red pumps, and pulled him on out of the pit. With nothing left to look at, Zach sighed, he knew he had to answer her question.

At first, he didn't know how to say it. They should have had someone else tell her, maybe his parents, but it was the only favor his brother had ever asked of him and he had to do it. Two hours before, as his brother lay on that hospital bed, already aware that his wife had died, looking as uncomfortable as a blister, he had whispered Zach's name. At first, Zach had thought he misheard him, but then their mother ushered him to his brother's side. All the while their father just sat in the corner chair, resting under an unlit light, stroking the

length of his beard. Even then, as his first born lay dying, he was a shadow of a man, a reflection of something else. Zach turned his attention toward his brother. He got close to him so that their faces were aligned and he could hear the rhythm of the breathing machine inhaling for his brother. Cluck, Cluck, Shooo. Hidden behind the multitude of bandages, he could barely make out the scar on Jimmy's temple he had gotten from a fall out of their old tree. Zach leaned in and kissed him. Jimmy's eyes flinched and he looked at Zach for a couple of minutes. All the memories of their childhood hit Zach at once. The duck walk Jimmy would do while chasing Momma around the kitchen. Jimmy's savvy smile. The fight they had over Sarah Parker in high school. They had been inseparable as children, but somehow they had grown apart. Zach's body shivered, as he held back his tears. Jimmy tried to muster a smile, his lips rising softly and then falling quickly. "Take care of my June bug for me," he whispered thinly, spreading it out in 10 second intervals. Then he paused, as his eyes roamed over to Father, who was playing with the light switch, clicking it on and off, then at Mother, who sat at the edge of the bed, folding a blanket, then unfolding it, and refolding it, then back to Zach again. Clearing his throat with a grunt, he resumed, "Promise you'll be the one to tell her." He paused again. "Be gentle. And tell her how much we loved her." Mother cried when he spoke but continued folding and Zach reassured him that he would tell June everything he said. Then, the machine clutched for the last time; Jimmy stopped barely breathing. Father finally rose from his seat in the corner. Walking slowly on his cellophane legs, he stood at the edge of the bed, placing one hand on mother's shoulder and the other on the dead body of his son. Mother whisked his hand away, as the blanket she had been folding fell to the floor. Zach touched his brother's hand, and as he watched the stillness in his brother's face, Zach walked out of the room. Jimmy died at the age of 35.

Now it was her eager face staring at him. She reached out, putting her thin hand on top of his and he began to tell her. At first, he rambled on quickly about God. Does she know who he is, he asked. She said she does. That she had received her Communion that past spring. So, he asked her if she had learned about heaven, and she told him a story about the angels and a blaring horn.

"So do you think of it as a bad place or a good place?" he asked, as the wind scattered some leaves about.

"A good place. God takes care of you there."

"Do you know how you get there?" he asked.

"No, not exactly. But my mom said her parents lives there."

"Well, it is a very special place and one day we are all gonna live there, but, some people get there before others, like your grandparents. It is a wonderful place, where everyone is happy and eats ice cream all day. But, they only way to get there is if God asks you to go. It is like his way of loving and protecting you. Do you understand me?"

"I guess. Are you going there soon?" she shrugged her shoulders and examined the scar she had been picking, but there was nothing left to pick at. It hurt to touch it.

"No, June bug. I am not."

"My dad calls me that, you know," she said while swinging her legs haphazardly, "I miss him," she sighed and looking at him out of the corner of her eye she said. "Can we go see him and mommy now?"

"No, we can't." he paused. He prayed that he did this right and that she would understand. He continued, "Because you see, last night, after the accident, God took your. . . ."

"When do I get to see them?" she said interrupting him. She was not crying yet, so he knew that she didn't understand.

"Well, not for a very long time."

He could see the tears swelling in her eyes

and the redness overcoming her cheeks, and he knew she realized what he was saying.

"You mean they are dead." Her face went faint, drained of its past color. She paused drawing her arms around her shoulders, in a self-embrace. "How could they die without me?" she moaned. Her words shocked him. Here he had been talking about Heaven and angels and she knew about death. But, worse, she felt abandoned. She rocked her cradled body back and forth as she began sobbing.

"They didn't want to, June," he said as he drew her into his arms. His fingers touched the creamy smoothness of her shoulders and slid behind her back. At first, he patted her back. But, when he felt the delicate curve of her spine frail like glass beneath her paper thin skin, he thought if he patted too hard it would shatter, so he started rubbing it small circles instead. He didn't want her to see him cry, but he couldn't hold his tears back, and he continued "but they had to go. They didn't have a choice." Her sobbing subsided for a minute as her body fell limp against his. He wondered if she was still breathing, but then he felt the wetness of her tears gather on his shoulder and the faint beating of her heart. "They told me to tell you that they loved you very much." He squeezed her tighter and she put her spaghetti arms around him and resumed sobbing. "They told me to tell you that they would watch over you from Heaven and that you would always be their precious wonderful daughter." She said nothing. They sat like that for over an hour, eventually, her sobs turned to slumber. It was while sitting on that park bench holding the sleeping June bug that Zach became an uncle.

Later that week, Zach's mother had arranged the funeral, ushered the guests about, and attempted to throw herself on her son's casket as it descended to the earth. Her performance had been highly dramatic and precise, as her arms flared about and she surged forward toward the casket. However, her attempt failed when mother's brother John restrained her just in time. Uncle John consoled her, like one would do to a child who lost a puppy, patting her head. After the funeral, mother took charge in her usual manner, making sure the couples affairs were left in order. "One must never wait to do tomorrow what one can do today," she often said. It was that same philosophy mother had used when the boys were younger. She made breakfast precisely at 7, lunch at 12, and dinner at 6. Tardiness was not tolerated. Father slithered to the table at mealtime, listened to mother's scrutiny about finding a better job and not dirty his white dress shirts. "They can be worn twice as long as you don't sweat, don't spill, and hang them up directly after work," she would say. After mealtime, father would return to his work or find refuge in the musty basement. When they were children, Zach and Jimmy found shelter from her domination in their attic, looking at Superman comics and playing multiple games of tic-tac-toe. When the children were older, Jimmy found shelter from his mother by spending as much time as possible out of the house and with other people. Zach did the exact opposite. Tuning out the whining of his mother and the grievances of the world, he would lay on his bed admiring the water stains.

He knew she realized what he was saying.
"You mean they are dead."

Now, as he stood casually in the kitchen, resting on arm on the counter and the other at his side, already having buried his brother and planning to return home, his mother told him the news. She was making coffee. Dad was off somewhere gardening, and June was watching reruns of Little House on the Prairie. She began:

"This is a sad thing that's happened." She

put one scoop into the pot.

"I know that," he said.

"I don't know if she is accepting it, she being so young and all. Your father and I really would like to take her in, but I am just too busy you know, what with the house to take care of, your fathers medication, my gardening club to look over. Did you know this year that I had the best roses?"

He told her he did not know.

"Yes, best in the county," she said while looking out the window towards the garden. The roses were dead now, but she pictured the blooming beauties in her head. She closed her eyes and smiled. "Well, anyway, your brother and his wife must have sensed that because they didn't leave June to us anyway." She was concentrating on the making the coffee again. He watched her feeble webbed-like hand drop another scoop into the pot. Mother had always referred to Jo-Anne like that, his wife.

Since they day Jimmy brought Jo-Anne to meet the family and they announced that they had eloped, mother had despised Jo-Anne. At first, they had lived close in town, but the next year they moved a few hours away. My mother and father went to see June every other weekend, but Mother avoided Jo-Anne at all costs, and Father went along with Mother. He always had.

He looked at his mother as she wiped off spilt coffee grinds from the oak counter. Knowing Jo-Anne's parents were dead, he asked, "Who else would they leave her to?"

She took a minute before answering as she poured another scoop into the coffeepot. Then she removed some. She had poured too much.

"You," she said, while looking at the coffeepot feeling and rubbing the old linen curtains between her index finger and her thumb.

"You who?" he asked.

"You, you, Zach," she said looking at him.

For a second there was silence. Then June bounced into the room. In her left hand, she carried Sammy, her stuffed elephant. She had gotten it at the circus three years ago. Mother asked if she would like a sandwich, maybe a grilled cheese. She said, "No, thank you." Instead, she wandered over to the fruit bowl and selected an orange. Mother offered to peel it for her. She said, "No, thank you." They watched her peel the orange, her small hands stumbling over the peel. She finished peeling it and then broke it into eight sections. She offered each two pieces. They declined. "Does grandfather like oranges?" she asked Mother. "Well, I think he does," Mother said. Although she knew the acid wasn't good for his stomach. "Well, I will go give him some," June said as she grabbed Sammy and the orange slices, trying to juggle both on her narrow waist as she walked out of the room in search of her grandfather.

After Zach saw her leave, he said, "I cannot take a kid in."

"I figured as much. A single man won't make a good parent for any kid," she replied.

June returned, oranges and elephant in hand. "I can't find him," she said. Her eyes wandered to the window and she saw him sitting on the patio writing in a notebook and holding aa thermometer in his left hand. He looked at it intently as the sun hit his eyes obstructing his view.

"What's he doing?" she asked them.

"Why, he is writing down the weather," Mother replied.

"The weather? What for?"

"I don't really know. It is just something he does."

"Oh," she said as she walked out the patio door.

"Well, then where is she going to go?"

"In the papers, they list Jo-Anne's sister as second choice."

"Jo-Anne has a sister?"

"Yeah. She lives in Maryland. She couldn't come to the funeral because she has two small kids and is due to give birth to a third any day now. The doctors wouldn't let her

travel. I have already called; she is willing to take her in. We can fly her out first thing in the morning."

"That is good," he said while putting his hands in his pocket. "She would like it better being with other kids. It will be good for her. But, I am not flying her out there alone. I will drive her."

Mother adjusted the bobby pins in her bun.

"You can leave in the morning. We can send the rest of her things out later when we go through the house," Mother said while wiping off the counter again. "I can never get this counter clean. It always seems dingy. It is because your father leaves his coffee mug on it. I tell him always use a coaster. He never listens." She avoided looking at him.

"We will leave in the morning," he agreed as he walked out of the room.

In the morning, they had told her that she was going to live with her mother's sister, Betty. "Can I take Sammy?" was her only response. "I am sure that would be fine," Mother had said. And with that, they had packed Zach's truck with her three small blue suitcases, said their good-byes, and pulled out of the driveway, leaving two small wrinkled figures waving in the distance. It was the first time since the park that they had been alone. Zach didn't quite know how to respond to her or what to say to her. She began their discussion.

"You drive a lot different than my daddy does," she said.

"Well, how did your daddy drive?"

"He didn't drive as fast as you, and he never let me sit in the front seat. He said I was too small and would fly right out the window if we got in an accident," as she talked, she clutched Sammy to her chest.

He thought about how maybe he shouldn't have her in the front seat. Jimmy was right. She could get hurt. But, in his truck there was no back seat. If he had kept her, he would have had to trade in the truck for a car. Good thing he didn't.

"Well, miss, I am not driving too fast (he was doing 55 in a 45) and I don't have a back seat. But, if you want, you can sit in the truck bed so that you feel safe," he said.

She looked out the little window in the rear of the truck and saw the large truck bed where her suitcases were tied down. The bed was covered in broken branches, twigs, and grasses. A pile of dirt rest kitty corner to her suitcases.

"It doesn't look very safe back there," she said," and besides, I think I would get dirty if I did."

They came to a stoplight just before they hit I-95. He took a minute to look at her. She wore two different socks, one blue one yellow, a red shirt, and light blue bottoms. Her barrettes were also off center.

"Who dressed you?" he asked almost laughing at the outfit his mother must have selected for the girl.

"I dressed myself," she said, smoothing out the wrinkles in her shirt with the back of her hand. "I am just learning how. Momma used to dress me."

His face reddened out of guilt as the light switched to green and they turned onto the highway. He hadn't thought to pick out her clothes. He supposed his mother would have done it. "Well, you have to learn sometime. You're doing a good job," he lied. Once on the highway, she silenced up and watched the passing cars.

"I am going to open the windows for a little. Okay, June?" he said.

"Why are you gonna do that? The wind will blow in my face. I don't like that."

"Well, if you must know everything, I am going to smoke a cigarette."

"Oh, but you can't do that. They are bad for you. They can give you the big C."

"Who told you about the big C?"

"I heard it on the news. And the big C isn't good for you either. It turns your lungs black and no one will talk to you. So, you can do it if you want, but I have to warn you that eventually, everyone will stop talking to you because your lungs are gonna be black."

"Is that a fact," he said as he put the cigarette to his lip. "Everyone will stop talking to me."

"Well, maybe I would talk to you and Sammy, but I am sure that is it."

With those words, he put the cigarette back in the box and shut the windows. "Well, I guess I would get bored with only you talking to me, so I shouldn't smoke," he jested and jabbed her side lightly with his finger. She smiled back at him. It was a sweet smile set in her round darling face, framed by her crooked barrettes.

"Sammy and I are going to nap now."

"Well, you two be my guest."

An hour into her nap, she began to get restless, and she unconsciously kicked off her shoes. For the next three hours, she slept soundly, her body moving only with the occasional jostling of the truck. As she slept, he noticed the mountain peaks falling and rising as they whisked by in his Ford S-10 pickup. It looked almost like a cascade of colors and shapes, they way they changed so quickly, he thought. After a few hours, it began to rain and the falling raindrop against the car metal woke her.

She remained silent for awhile, curled up with her elephant. She noticed that she had kicked off her shoes in her sleep and reached down to retrieve them. As she reached down, he caught her arm. "Wait until we stop. I don't want you to get hurt," he requested. She did as she was told and relaxed her body back into the seat. Her body fit awkwardly in the front seat of the truck. She began swinging her feet gently.

"I don't mean to be rude, Uncle Zatch, but could we stop for lunch? Sammy is starving."

He smiled at the way she said his name. She never pronounced it right and always added the "tch" sound. "Sure, we can, just give me another few miles. We have to get gas anyway. What would Sammy like to eat?"

"I would like to eat McDonald's. Stuffed animals can't speak. They don't get a choice. They eat what you give them," she said.

"Oh, well, McDonald's it is then."

They pulled into the McDonald's and parked underneath the golden arches. She put on her shoes. He lifted her out of the car because he wasn't sure if it was too high for her. She left Sammy in the car and told her uncle that before they ate that she had to use the restroom. He held the door for her as they walked in. She looked for the restroom. He asked her if she needed help. She said no and that she had done it herself for years. He felt foolish, but he wasn't sure if it was like dressing herself. She headed for the restroom and he followed, planning on waiting for her outside the door. As she opened the restroom door, she saw him standing there.

"You don't have to wait. I'll be ok," she said and with that, her red hair disappeared behind the door.

At first, he thought about waiting anyway, but then he turned and headed toward the counter. He arrived at the counter, just as the cashier turned to yell to the cooks, "I need a fish now." Her half turned body exposed her broad backside, a thick waist, and a long braid that came to the middle of it. The thick braid swung back and forth with the sway of her hips and made a swooshing sound as she turned to face him. Her fat dull lips opened slightly upon seeing him. He noticed a few whiskers on her chin, thick eyebrows, and what seemed to be a receding hairline. On her shirt, she wore a tattered nametag that read: Hirley. He thought that it was probably missing a S and should read: Shirley.

"Welcome to McDonald's, home of the Big Mac. How can I help you?" she asked.

"I would like one Big Mac, a large fry, and

a large Pepsi."

"We have Coke."

"That's fine. Could I also get whatever it is you sell for kids?"

"You mean a Happy Meal."

"Yeah, can I get one of those."

"What type?"

"The one for eight year olds."

"I mean hamburger, cheeseburger, or chicken nuggets?"

"Cheeseburger," he said reluctantly. Jimmy liked them best as a kid.

He paid the lady, took the tray as the lady winked at him, and sat down. He sat near the restroom so that she would spot him. She came out and had a little piece of toilet paper stuck to her shoe. She sat down and he put her food before her.

"You didn't have to order for me. I could have done it myself," she said.

"It was no problem. I hope you like cheeseburgers," he said grinning.

She frowned and looked into the bag. She did not like cheeseburgers. She took out the fries, the burger, and the action figure. He offered her ketchup and she refused politely.

"I like to dip my fries in mustard," she said.

"Oh, well, that is different," he said.

"No, not really, my mother used to do it."

She ate her fries slowly, hoping he didn't notice that she didn't eat the cheeseburger. But, he did anyway.

"Why aren't you eating your burger? You said you were starving."

"I am saving it for Sammy," she lied. He waited a minute, thinking about how to respond. "Kids are so odd," he thought, "one minute she is telling me stuffed animals do not talk and the next she is trying to feed them."

"Well, I will get Sammy one on the way out. I promise," he said, deciding it was best to indulge her.

"That is nice of you. May I go buy him his burger now? I would feel bad eating until I know his food is here and safe."

"Well, ok. If you insist," he said, handing her a five dollar bill. "Make sure and get him a fries and coke too. I don't want him asking to stop in another hour."

She took the money and walked to the counter. Hirley asked her what she wanted. She responded that she would like one hamburger Happy Meal. As she waited, she noticed the lady's nametag and asked her if her name was Shirley and they had forgotten the S. Insulted, the lady said no that it was Harley and that her boss had misspelled it. Hirley charged the girl and asked her why her father hadn't taught her it is not polite to ask questions. As Hirley spoke her eyes wandered over to Zach. June responded that he was not her father. "Oh, now that I think about it, you two don't look alike," Hirley responded handing the girl the food. June returned to her uncle.

When she sat down, June asked Zach to get her some mustard. As he went off in search of it, she switched the cheeseburger with the hamburger. When Zach returned, he found her chomping away at her burger.

"Wow, you were really worried about Sammy weren't you?" he asked kidding around.

"Yes, I was," she said, she didn't know how to tell him that she didn't like cheese. It didn't seem polite. Her father had always told her to tell her mother that she liked whatever she cooked for dinner, even if she was really hiding it in her napkin and feeding it to the dog. He said that was polite. Zach laughed to himself as he noticed the lack of cheese on her burger, but decided to let her think she was getting away with something. Kids are always happier when they're getting away with something, he thought.

She finished up the few remaining scraps of her burger and the last couple of fries, as he watched through the windows as kids huddled together on the plastic playground. He asked June if she wanted to run about on it for awhile.

She said no. She grabbed Sammy's Happy Meal and they walked to the car. As he lifted her into the truck, he noticed that her shoelaces had come untied again during the meal. He reached down to tie the yellow laces of her pink running shoes. At first, his big hands stumbled with the thin laces, but he soon got the hang of it. He told her to double knot them, seeing as how they kept coming undone. She asked him how it was done and he showed her. "One loop, two loops, and then you do it all over again," he said, "and if you do it wrong the first time, just do it again." She nodded in agreement. He got into the driver's seat, checked the mirrors and drove to a gas station.

After filling the gas tank, they were back on the road, heading toward Maryland. She kept to herself mostly, making sure to give Sammy the Happy Meal, but Sammy politely refused. He kept his eyes on the road, cautious of a weary driver ahead of him. The car held to the right, but periodically skidded to the left. June sat gazing out of the window trying to read the road signs. She began biting her nails, a habit she had for years. He heard the sound, the incessant sound of her teeth attacking her nails.

"I used to do that when I was younger," he said.

"You did?"

"Yeah, it drove your dad crazy," he thought a minute, "every time he saw me doing it, he would slap my hand. Eventually I just stopped."

"Oh."

"Did he ever do that to you?"

"I don't remember."

"You can't remember?"

"I don't want to talk about them," she said turning her attention to the window.

"Well, we won't then. What would you like to talk about?"

She had stopped biting her nails. He had opened his window a bit to get fresh air. The breeze blew wisps of hair onto her forehead. She tried to hold them back with her hand.

"Don't you have any kids?" she asked.

"No, not that I know of."

"How couldn't you know?"

"Well, never mind. It was a joke that eight-year-olds don't understand."

"Well, neither do seven-year-olds."

"You're seven?"

"Yeah, I'll be eight soon, I had my birthday almost a year ago."

"I thought you were eight."

She shook her head and reiterated that she was in fact seven because seven year-olds were in second grade and she was in second grade. He agreed and acknowledged his error.

"So you don't like kids. You know, they are pretty nice sometimes," she said.

"Yeah. I guess that is true, but I just haven't had the chance to have any yet."

She looked at him for a moment. His hands rested on the steering wheel, his fingers tapping against it.

"You could have me," she paused, "that is if you want to try it out and see if you like it. You could always give me back later if you want."

His hands tensed up. He bright sun stared him in the eyes. He pulled over onto the side of the road. Looking over at her small body cowered in the corner behind her seatbelt, while her stubby hands attempted to fix her barrette, he realized that seven-year-olds amazed him.

"Darling, if I kept you, I would never give you back," he paused, "but I don't think I would make a good father and I know your aunt will make a wonderful mother."

Tears spilled from her eyes although she tried to blink them back. Her barrette fell from her hands, landing in her lap. She picked it up. The incoming wind blew her hair across her cheek. "But, I don't even know her. I knew my mother and she knew I didn't eat cheese and that I ate mustard on everything. My dad didn't like that I bit my nails, but he let me do

it anyway."

"But you know that your parents are still with you. You are not alone. I will always be here for you, but I can't be a father." He had never thought about being a father before, but for a second, sitting there with her, her hair blowing, her eyes wild with emotion, he hoped that one day he would have a daughter like her. But that one-day wasn't today.

She shrugged, trying not to sniffle.

"Then, where are they? If they are still with me, where are they? Where is Heaven?" She threw her hands up in frustration, the barrette and Sammy fell to the floor.

"Well, Heaven is all around you. They are all around you. I can't explain it exactly, but one day you'll realize what I am saying. Please don't be upset with me for leaving you with your aunt. To be honest, I don't know if it is best, but I know it is better for you than being with me." He knew that this aunt would be a good mother to her and give her the stability she deserved.

She straightened her back and wiped her eyes. Looking directly at him, she said, "Well, I was really only offering for you since you don't have any kids, because at least I have already had parents. You just haven't had anyone."

With that, he kissed June on the top of her head. "It was a lovely offer, June."

He saw his brother looking back at him, dancing in her eyes. He was doing the right thing. She reached down, retrieving her barrette and Sammy. He pulled back onto the road. She fell asleep, holding Sammy in one hand and her barrette in the other. She slept the rest of the car ride. An hour later, he found himself pulling into her aunt's driveway. The quaint house had blue shutters and a large yard. In the middle, stood a large oak tree with a tire swing. Next to it lay a red rider truck, placing them at the door to her aunt's house. He woke her. The seat had left creases on her cheek and she rubbed her eyes with sleepiness. He lifted her to the ground, placing Sammy in her hands.

They looked at each other.

"So, you'll be ok here."

"Yeah, will you be ok?"

"Yeah, I think so," he laughed.

"Are you gonna walk me in?"

"No, you go in on your own. I will watch." He didn't feel like listening to the chitchat of her aunt.

"Ok," she hesitated, walking slowly toward the door. She turned toward him and extended her right hand. He shook it, resisting the urge to hug her.

"Here, you take Sammy. I don't want you getting lonely on the trip back."

At first he hesitated, putting his hands in his pockets, then he realized the seriousness of her statement. He took the elephant and got in the car. He watched her walk to the door and her aunt came out, her belly round and plump bulging out from her dress. She asked June if he was coming in and June said no. Her aunt embraced her. As he pulled away, the wind blew her aunts dress slightly above her knee revealing the creamy whiteness of her legs and June's hair with only one barrette flew about wildly again. Then the wind stopped. And he and Sammy were gone.

"Honey, I am so happy you're here. You look so much like your mother," she said while smoothing June's hair and ushering her through the front door. "I would have liked to meet your uncle." June took one last look through the tattered screen before turning back to her aunt to respond.

"Don't worry, he'll be back one day."

Guarding Pisa

Lisa Rying

When the guard threw his voice
in musical scales to the walls of the Baptistery
to show the people the dogma of architectural perfection,
it climbed in serpentine motion up to gods cupola
only to return back to the fonte,
flying back at us with such abandon
that it seemed to fall upon our skins
like our past loves. Each head tilt
in the direction of the invisible caresses,
the ones wanted but never received,
as if to receive such kisses
would be asking too much of our sun
that could warm countenances with silent grace,
falling around bodies in sheets of warm down,
keeping the lovers in the beds of the subtle memories,
that reclimb into their perceptions like forgotten children.
Seeking the multiplicities of Mary, we are hiding
from the sun shower outside these Brunelleschian grey-white walls,
with the people darting in every way under the umbrellas
of Italy that shelter us from years of that pellet
of Communism that will not relent in its shadowing
of the way the signore smile. The people are instead
finding the echoes of an Italy they once
knew, of these walls tattooed with solace,
as if they were chiaroscuro canvases
of wood and flesh. Whether these followers be under the mastery
of the patron saint of this citta, or their comfortable lovers,
these annunciations finally allow the people to draw
the skins of churches around their own bodies, like cloaks in winter,
quietly and motherly. It brings a little life
and a little death, for what our divinities
and our lovers demand of us, as we go to amore
and a morte. The man keeps scaling and protecting this Pisa,
telling us enough of his own history in the way
his throat elongates in such passion
that he becomes something more than human,
guarding this fire of yours and mine,
that has somehow been unleashed
like a welcome beast, bringing with him
a rewritten rite of passage,
stealthily, and without our permission, yet not
without our vibrating desires.

Ancestry

Uttama Sharma

my family has

skin
        dark like a river
eyes
        like stars in the night sky
hair
        thick like the trunk of a tree

i find my heritage in distant voyages,
colored dreams, and scattered stories
that transport me to an ancient country
peopled with mangos, monkeys, monsoons
temples and timeless wisdom

my father's father was a priest
who told horoscopes and
followed the advice of the stars
when marrying people-
in the summer,
the auspicious days were always in the summer

and in the winter
he came home with empty hands
and sadly greeted his wife,
their hungry children

there was no money, only need

and the one time my father spoke
of the man who collected debts
in his village
i heard a veiled, dated rage
in his easy voice
as he told me of the hate
he felt for this man
that left his father
feeling helpless, nervous
not quite the man
he wanted to be
to his family

my mother's mother blossomed
in the grassy farmlands of her country
        -my country-
growing plump and happy
on the rich milk of cows
and buffalos

she married a proud, intense man
who beat her
and her children
and yet
my mother loves this man
in a way that she has never loved
any man
even her own husband-

my father

who is always telling me
of the value of money
how there is nothing like it

and though i shun these sentiments
i know
behind his words
lie his memories of a hunger
that he could not control
that was constant
in his life
like food is in mine

his mother died
like this:
she served her husband his dinner
lay down on the floor
closed her eyes
and left the world
doing her duty to the last
like a good woman should

my mother loves people,

but never needs them
hers is a self-reliance of the
worst kind
she is a lion
like her father
proud and fierce

i swear
more than dna is passed along
in the blood

his blood
her blood
my blood

our blood
brims with pride and passion
hunger and fear
loyalty
        and love
a binding, choking love
that is rarely voiced
but that underlies
the blows we throw
the deeds we do
the words we write
everything

Across the blue

Missy Walker

Across the blue,
into the season,
I wear your eyes
like turquoise studded

on my silver bracelet.
It's the first day of fall
and your hair's as gold
as poplar leaves, I hold
your head between
my hands as if
to press the memory as
gently as between the
pages of a book
into my consciousness.

Stepping back and
breathing,

I want to
touch you, but I
fold away the longing,
tie my hair back
in a knot onto itself.

I'm better (and worse)
than naked-this
transparent clothed
in cotton and your eyes. So blue.
Like my bracelet,
or rip tide in
September. Like
fear:

standing still
between you and the door,

I want
to touch you, but
I don't trust
my intuition when I'm
dressed this well
in blue, and silver,
and you, and the
thickness of your
eyes.

Convertible

Amy Vyas

You are lying there with your girlfriend when she turns over and says, "Tell me a story about when we were falling in love." You are practically asleep and it is a few moments before you realize what a problem this question is.

You think "Fuck," because you are not sure you're in love with her. In fact, you think you must not be—they tell you you would be sure if you were.

All this thinking is taking up time and she says, "Well?" She smiles at you and you try to remember when you first said I love you to this girl. You decide it must have been one of those times you were half drunk and having sex over at her place. You always feel a little guilty going to her apartment because it looks tired and messy when you leave.

"I'm thinking," you say.

After a time you speak about being at the state fair with her after you got her that new bracelet. You say how you watched her wrists, and thought them pale and too pretty for those beads, which you say you wanted to take off and replace with gold.

She smiles and pulls her right hand out from under the covers and looks at her wrist in the light. She remembers you seemed distracted at that fait. She says, "I had to win the stuffed animal. Remember that? You couldn't even win a stuffed animal. I thought you didn't want to be there. I thought you were in a funk."

You say no, you were just distracted by her. You wonder if in fact you were in "a funk" that day.

She moves over, close to you, and says, "Aren't you glad we found each other?" You put an arm around her and pull her closer because you can't bring yourself to say anything. The fact is you want someone better for her, because she really does have beautiful pale wrists.

It is not two weeks later that she lets you know she's pregnant. When she tells you she shakes a little and looks as if she's going to cry. You expected this—this is the sort of thing that happens. You take her and hug her to your chest so that you can't see her face, and say, "It's okay, don't worry, it'll be okay," and it doesn't even sound like your voice speaking.

"I'm going to make sure," she says. "I'm not one hundred percent sure."

You wonder what this means, exactly, and you look at her and then kiss her forehead and hug her again. This seems like the thing to do.

That Friday you find yourself with your friends, sitting in a booth at the window of the restaurant where you used to work. "Look," he says, "it's been a long time since I've seen you." He does not know anything.

You say yes.

He is talking at you about the guy who was supposed to cover the next shift not showing up, and about other things you do not hear. You are wondering if there will be an opening soon. You watch the cars coming over the bridge toward the restaurtant. It's the end of the week, rush hour. People are glad to be going home. "Here is the deal," you think. "If the next car that comes over that bridge is a convertible, I'll ask her to marry me." You watch and it is a convertible, green and low to the ground, and it may as well be a whole string of them, marching like a parade over that bridge. You feel like you must have known somehow, with your stories and all.

You turn and look at your friend. He is leaning back in his seat, away from you, looking satisfied or amused. "Isn't it great?" he says.

"It is great," you answer.

The Latin word was *fugere*, to flee;
the English tongue has rounded off some of
the sharpest corners until refugee
remains. (And sometimes, if I hold the page
just *so*, I can see in it *fulgere*—
to flash, to shine, to beam.)

She says
the histories have managed to forget
how hard it was to forge another life
out of an unfamiliar soil, to tame
the emptiness that felt like hunger but
was not. And I was thin enough to break,
she smiles, without real laughter. You could see
the blood move through me, and my shoulder blades
poked through my skin like wings about to bud.
With pity as a pigment in their eyes,
an accent of their speech, they wondered if
I could still believe. Here; now. And after *then*.
I did not tell them—nights I sang myself
to sleep and back awake: *Ani maamin.*
G-d faithful, to a faithful people, I
believe. And G-d of cruelty, G-d of silence,
ani maamin. But you come late, my friend.

And some nights he seemed not to come at all.
Yes, even in the new land it was hard
to find enough of hope even to pray.
Divinity is precious in the space
of breath to breath. And everything was new
except the dreams. My g-d looked something like
myself: bones weary from the struggle with
a flesh-and-pressure gravity, eyes wide
and pupils drunk on light that could not sate.
He still haunts me.

She smoothes the worn skin of
her arm where it bleeds blue and tries to form
a sentence or a smile, but all that comes
is something like a prayer against the time.

He cannot now forget. *Ani maamin.*
For I am marked. He knows that I am his.

Ani Maamin: Anna's verse

Alexis Blane

Ani maamin, ani maamin,
Ani maamin,
Be'emuno shleymo
B'vias hamoshiakh,
B'vias hamoshiakh, ani maamin.

I believe with perfect faith
In the coming of the Messiah.
And though he be delayed—
Nevertheless, I believe.

The Neon and the Sound

Ben Morris

Come one, proclaims a painted grin —
come see the fun and taste the sin
inside this fractured crystal trap
where mirrors shine and if perhaps
you deign to find a saffron scrap
of light not painted, crimson tainted,
you may just glimpse the hate within.

With perfumes rich, the Orient's
air silent seeps, seduces men
away from sleep and towards the den
of pleasures now — come take a bow,
you've won, you've won, the race is run —
so claim your prize and with your eyes
behold the screaming of the sun,

whose cry is drowned by shouts and shrieks
and grey metallic random sounds
as through the streets the liquid flows
unceasing in its torrid wake,
but as it goes it shall not slake
the thirst eternal of the crowd,
the thirst within they do not know.

And stars collide like marbles eyed
by children energetic glad —
haste shocks the ride and mocks the sun,
compelled by wrath to leave a swath
of writhing bodies electric mad
to taste it all and ne'er be done,
scorched silver in the aftermath.

The neon and the sound, twin ghosts,
creep through the mists and bury in
the fertile little nightwise brains —
and as they go the children know
that something inward stays amiss,
so more! they cry and yearn to die
ere cursèd daylight slays their bliss.

On trampled grass a weightless voice
proclaims the beauty of such noise
as turning wheels and rusting gears
and papers in the wind.
In future years there goes a call,
to make of truth a welcome end:
not one, he says, come all.

the archive

spring
two thousand one
volume one hundred thirteen
issue two

the archive

spring
two thousand one
volume one hundred thirteen
issue two

Staff

Editor: Alexis Blane

Jennie Berkesch
Ben Morris
Bess Newman
Gina Rebollar
Hannah Star Rogers
Lisa Rying
Missy Walker
Katy Wischow
Amy Vyas

Special Thanks

Beverly Meek
Moli Jones and The Publishing Place
Jon Uslander
Angie Thornberg
The Bassett Fund
Vinny Eng

The Archive is a franchise publication of the Duke University Undergraduate Publications Board at Duke University, North Carolina. The magazine accepts contributions from all interested parties; however, staff will not consider work that has been submitted concurrently to another campus publication. Authorial anonymity is preserved throughout the review process. Correspondance should be addressed to the Editor, c/o Undergraduate Publications at 101-3 Bryan Center; Duke University, Durham, NC 27708.

contents: poetry and prose

escape (where is life?)	*aaron greenblatt*	6
The Baptism of a Heretic	*lisa rying*	7
Beginnings in the West End	*chintan maru*	8
L'Idée en Soie	*alexis blane*	10
Dreams	*erin blevins*	13
To Mr. Ernest Hemingway, Edith Wharton, and Other Significant Talents	*missy walker*	14
Gongzhou, 1963	*belinda yu*	15
Where is our fungus collection?	*hilarie lloyd*	16
Spoiled Brat	*bess newman*	18
La Quinta	*roger pao*	19
Raptus	*belinda yu*	20
Glass Words	*hannah star rogers*	21
untitled	*peter jordan*	22
the fall.	*shannon rosati*	23
A Story of the Baptism	*natalie phillips*	24
A to East	*erin blevins*	26
Eva	*katherine thompson*	27
Cloe's Slave Cemetery	*rawn m. james, jr.*	28
Defenseless	*hilarie lloyd*	32
The Hot Zone	*ben morris*	33
Horror	*amy vyas*	34
green shorts.	*shannon rosati*	35
Daughter	*alison niebanck*	36
modern American male	*aaron greenblatt*	39
Hotel Blues	*jennifer oh*	40
Random Blessings	*missy walker*	43
What I Would Try to Save	*lisa rying*	44
Variations on the Circus	*katherine thompson*	46
Corinthians	*natalie phillips*	47
unresolved	*uttama sharma*	50
the gravestone	*daniel eiras*	51
Inertia is not like god	*amy vyas*	52
Rain	*jennifer oh*	54
In the space of time	*carole de souza*	58
homeward, bound	*alexis blane*	60

contents: art

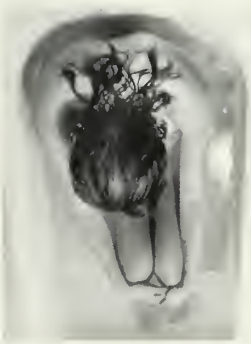
kensy cooperrider

lily hayes kaufman

hua wang

daniel eiras

ashley wick



lisa rying

jessica snow

hilarie lloyd

escape (where is life?)

I want, IthinkIwant to go
across the country dreaming and reading
and reading and occasionally reading things i've written
between books up in the old haunts
where i've taken steps two at a time in old
Americana towns with old trees and signs that read
"Population, colon," and some three digit number, maybe four
where everyone knows everyone's name
and they all know they don't know mine
and i can be the words i speak in those lofts above the cafes
where the town scryers go to wax
because no one's there who knows me so well to tell me
that i'm not those words i'm saying, to tell me
"that is not what you meant
not what you meant at all" and i can walk out
and the locals and scryers won't give a damn
and on to the next town or to a kitchen
where i've managed to convince some owner i'll be around for more than it takes
to make bus fare and three meals, so i can say to myself that my words will feed me
or washing dishes will, that's my choice
or i can starve, try the suffering artist gig, tho i think
i don't care so much for suffering, but maybe stopping the hunger
could be inspiring, i think that's how Fitzgerald operated
or at least Mrs. Laverty said something like that in 11th grade.
But i stream.
i should stop before i drown.

but to stand at the day's end in the sun
with the other long shadows.
travel west fast enough and the sun never sets.

Aaron Greenblatt

The Baptism of a Heretic

Under this cupola, you, Dante, received your baptism
into the family of things. I can see the priest
holding you over the fount, letting the weight of you
fall from his hands, dangling you, naked
and dripping with the water
in front of the congregation,
sanctified under the eyes of that Christ,
himself hanging in his own suspension,
and that Lucifer of Coppo di Marcovaldo,
the largest in all the land,
holding others in suspension, feasting on their
sins. In the beginning,
these bodies above you
marked yours an uneasy birth,
as you would live over the precipice
of the worlds, viewing the destiny of each,
the beatified and the damned,
both lords unwilling
to forget you as their child,
a man who would have the power to write
a remembrance for a people who had worshipped
before the saviour had come.
You renamed the reign of Christ
and sneered at the ignorance of the Inquisition
and its misconceptions of where the devil resides.
You would take both
with you, the exalted and the fallen
down into the flames
in your unwillingness to let the curtain of night
fall down upon the land of your exile
before redemption had been written into history,
knowing that one mired soul, Virgil,
lame in his own holiness,
would at least understand
what it meant to leave something behind,
and knowing how that water,
falling from your shivering body onto this mosaic floor,
could bring you only so much peace
for the shadowed wilderness of your life
that was to come.

Lisa Rying

Beginnings in the West End

Pop
glittery eyes, quick-witted with her mime

Hop
second chin—jiving with her rhyme

while doing her work biological
she slips into the lyrical

Show me your bounce, your jest, your style, your certainty

brawn brother with thick arms, thick lips
heeding the lyrics that chic sister flips
then miming her mime
but less measure in his rhyme

Are you feeling my hymns, my humble genes, my kind appeal?

at West End they founded beauty in the blackest
and sounded harmony in the violent masses

but do not misinterpret
the tough 'hood or black folk
wouldn't be the culprit
so

Drop

the illusion that kids outta the ghetto
aren't fresh like the son of Gipetto

Pop

glittery eyes, quick-witted with her mime
second chin—jiving with her rhyme

Chintan Maru

L'Idée En Soie
neuroscience after W. Stevens, et. al.

I.

The warp and the woof of it, the raw wheat
scent of the raw surface of it exposed
and shimmering in the rude eye of the sun:

Idea bound tightly in the skin of speech,
a skein of silk spun out to compass in
something which is receding like the sea,

cresting and receding in the web
comprising the awareness which is that
of the most recent pasts come tumbling in.

II.

Begin where it is inarticulate.
Begin at the beginning where the sky
is hanging like a lead lid overhead—

a shadow stretched from ear to ear— and in
the foreground something blazes up and dies.
Now name it. As it burns its way across

the scrying retinal threads, reach out and catch
the tail end of the comet coming by
and call its body crimson, call it back

III.

into itself. It will be always gone;
before you come to it; before the flare
of body and the passing shudders up

the tender stalky spines; always beyond
the russet hunch of tongue which tries to hold
up half the sky without the help of arms.

It lingers, afterimaged as pure light
and tinted by its length; and swift tongues weave
the tongues of flame together like a shroud.

IV.

You spin it taut to drape about the bare
bleached bones dug up to try to hold the shape
of something passing, always passing, past.

The prime itself is moving always, all
ways moving; and you capture the clean edge
with more correctness—the sharp edges and

the motion of its gait. From these you build
back outward to an image, lean and dapper,
dressed in silk-spun sunsets sized with swords.

V.

Buried four levels deep there always lurks
the nature of belief: the brutal, bright
sulfur yellow of its face: dark angel,

bearer of light, which will not be broken
by stones or by bones to the bridle of naming.
After the first reduction there is but

expansion. The world renders itself up
in skeletons we swaddle with our lips
and bright shocks we breathe out as languages.

Alexis Blane

CHURCH
UNITED METHODIST

Dreams

She left the week's first dream laid out plain in her journal. We could tell she'd had one from the way she sat at the breakfast table, pulling the inside from her bagel and leaving the round shell. She was hardly out the door before Mother was in her room, flipping through the pages. We shivered at the dream, at her bare feet walking through snow in an orchard. The impossible red of the apples made us laugh.

We devour her dreams. They come too fast, too strong for her, so we gnaw holes in the thick cloud of them—so she can breathe. The red apples and white snow sustained us for a while, but after three days and no dreams we felt two-dimensional, slid around the corners of the house like shadows on the walls. At dinnertime she'd tell us about her day at school, but it was not the same.

Father found the dream of the golden man, set between the books on her shelf as if we couldn't see the difference. It shone, and we breathed deeply of the way he tossed his hair back, of the light that brushed his skin. She sat behind a camera lens, and we heard the shutter click. We shivered again. The golden man cupped her hands like doves and at dinner that night she lay them on the table softly, like wings or feathers come to rest. She had circles under her eyes. "I can't remember my dreams," she said. "I remember them when I wake up, but in an hour or a day they're gone." Father gave a curious laugh and Mother told her gently that it happened to everyone sometimes, and would stop soon. She nodded, but that night she slept with the door of her room closed.

We knew she was having dreams—we could tell, from the way she sat at the breakfast table. We knew she was hiding them; her eyes grew dark and after dinner each night she'd go to her room and shut the door. We'd sit outside it, staring, breathing quietly, until one night we heard the snick of the lock and we knew that she knew. Father was angry, but Mother made him remember the taste of her dreams, how much we needed them. The three of us sat and stared at the white, wood-panel door. Around us the house turned grey and filled with dust.

She hid her dreams like Easter eggs, some nestled in trees, some buried, some in high cupboards in the kitchen. We found them all eventually, but only after they'd gone stale and the color had dried out of them. Starving, sometimes we'd eat them anyway, the corners sticking in our mouths.

We found the last dream wrapped with cotton and still fresh. She'd hidden it inside her pillow. We clustered around the bed and unwound each layer, clumsy with excitement. Suddenly the last piece pulled free and there she was, walking through a field of imperfect grass. A white rock sparkled in the light and caught her eye—she stopped, bent over to pull it from the ground. Long fingers worked it free, leaving a small hole in the dirt where it lay. She held it in her palm; it was small, cold. Suddenly, ten thousand ants swarmed from the hole in the ground. They were tiny and red-brown, and crawled everywhere. She was consumed. The ants ran over the white rock lying on the ground.

We liked this dream. Its juice was sweet and made us lick our fingers.

Erin Blevins

To Mr. Ernest Hemingway, Edith Wharton, And Other Significant Talents

It is the girl who hands me a glass and a towel
out of the shower and says, "quick,
get dressed."

Here's to the night
and hoping . . .

but I am young, and I have nothing to write.

Beneath the smoke and single ceiling lamp, the women move around me
on the axes of white arms and dim conversation
heard only in whispers screamed above the distraction (music).

Men hover in the corners, ready
to play parts that they've only read. They are my truest fiction.

Bodies moving through the crowd rustle like fingers turning pages.
A backdoor by the bathroom slams and reopens,
breathes escape.

I hear toilets flushing through the wall
as I rest my bare back
against the cold light of stars.

Missy Walker

Ghongzhou, 1963

What did I know, what did I know
of love's austere and lonely offices?
-Robert Hayden, "Those Winter Sundays"

My father loved dancing with my mother.
Their bodies were young and strong;
their laughter warmed our house.
This is the story my mother tells.
This is the story my mother chooses to remember.
But there is another story of famine and hardship,
and this one doesn't come so easily.
My father was sent to a labor camp for a number of years.
No reason was given for his detainment. None was required.
The last time I saw father alive was when I was seven years old,
visiting his camp in the Ghongzhou countryside.
He was so thin. He had a thin shaking voice
and a thin trembling body.
He asked me to go with him to the fields
where he worked so that we could harvest the potatoes
that grew quietly beneath our feet.
I watched my father kneel and plunge his hands into the soil;
saw him wrestle a few feeble-looking potatoes from the ground.
I knelt down beside my father and saw
how when he sifted the soil with his hands,
his sweat melted into the ground.
And when father had gathered a handful of potatoes,
he gave them to me—every one.
I have never forgotten my father's brave gift,
his last gesture of love.
I have never forgotten how from those barren fields,
My father made a harvest.

Belinda Yu

Where is our fungus collection?

Who drowned the worms dead white
that you summoned for me,
and I forgot, left in a pail
of shallow dirt?

When did the flash
of the salamander tail
stop flicking between us
across a peeling picnic table?

What killed the tiger toad
in our aquarium, eyelids
over a shriveled nothing
for days before we noticed?

Why did you sell the rabbit skin
I gave you from Quebec,
picked from a handmade basket
and softer than the rest?

In the jungle of my childhood,
Papa of the woods and Papa
of the deer, how did it happen?
how did I ever lose you?

Hilarie Lloyd

RADIO
FLYER

Spoiled Brat

The thing that I remember most about Robin's house was that it was never clean. Not clean like our house was, with lemon furniture polish smoothed over the wood and the carpets streaked with vacuum tracks. At her house, the hallways were cluttered with baseball mitts and comic books and winter jackets. In her kitchen, half-empty juice cartons were left on the counters, and her two cats climbed on top of the TV. There were crumbs permanently lining the grooves between counter tiles.

I remember that Robin's mother and her grandmother loved knitting. They tried to teach me once, but I never got any farther than half of a scarf. I couldn't understand how they didn't find it boring. But her mother knit for real, her grandmother too. They were both always in the middle of projects, of Christmas presents, of matching sweaters. My mother bought all of my clothes new from a department store. Robin's grandmother sold the hand-made sweaters in a small booth at the annual sidewalk bazaar. The one that I remember most is the globe sweater, a map of the world, each continent a different color on a bright aqua background. It seemed as though she had been working on it for years, a country bigger every time I came over.

We went to nursery school together in a huge building that looked like an ark. Or what I thought Noah's ark would have looked like, all dark wood and rounded corners. Robin's father drove us to school most days, in his white Volvo station wagon. We played with the vent controls, black curves with a white stripes down the middle, they looked just like Oreos. Even though we never ate Oreos at my house. Sometimes in winter, when there was a lot of snow or it was particularly icy, her father's car wouldn't make it up my driveway, so he would park at the bottom and walk all the way up the steep hill to fetch me.

Her house was much louder than mine, too. People were always coming and going, her brothers and their friends, her parents and their friends, her grandparents and aunts and uncles. When I was over there, I was thrown into the mix unnoticed, just another kid.

Once when I spent the night at Robin's, I couldn't fall asleep. I crept out of bed, and knelt by the doorway to play with her My-Little-Ponies in the light from the hallway. I heard her parents coming towards me, and I froze, suddenly afraid that I would get in trouble for being awake after bedtime. They didn't see me, though, as they walked by. Her mom was talking.

"So what time tomorrow do you need to be at work?"

"Around ten," her father replied. "But I can keep the girls until then."

"Yeah, I talked to Kathy's mom this morning, and she said you can drop them off at her house whenever you want." Robin's mom laughed, a harsh bark. "She probably has their maid or whoever on call all day to watch her kids. Spoiled brats."

With a sickening feeling in my stomach, I watched their shadows fade away down the hall. Their laughter echoed faintly as the distance between us grew.

Bess Newman

La Quinta

Loneliness is a hotel room in Palm Springs.
The black and white rendition of Arctic wolves on the far wall.
The burnt sienna carpeting stained with coffee and wine.
The foreign channel numbers of the television set.
I do not know whether to watch or not watch.

Tetris cubes from the downstairs arcade fill my mind.
I rotate the colored cube patterns to eliminate the rows.
I want to believe that I will fall asleep if I win.
The pillow suffocates the back of my head.
I press my cold hands over my temples to moderate the heat.

My parents will worry if I call home now.
They will imagine every accident that could happen at night.
I will tell them I am fine.
My $120 hotel room has its own refrigerator.
The balcony view of the pool rivals the brochure photos.

Moonlight reflects off the silver spokes of the sprinkler.
An ashtray sits on the edge of the nightstand.
I do not want to think of fire.
The Palm Springs Angels swept their doubleheader yesterday.
Someone upstairs has finished a bath.

I contemplate the revolving glass doors in the hotel lobby.
How they shoot light like a spiral of prisms.
How I feel cleansed of sorrow and unease in their light.
How the children play merry-go-round inside.
Turning and turning while their mother warns them to stop.

The red letters of the clock flash 3:58.
A brown spot on the ceiling becomes a spider when I stare.
It moves shapelessly as if it has somewhere to go.
I bunch up the sheets into the shape of my security blanket.
I feel and do not feel seven again.

Roger Pao

Raptus

A girl that suffers eventually becomes a woman.
I am that girl, eight years old.
I play with dolls, watch cartoons,
am just learning to ride my bike
(and have the scabs to show for it.)
My favorite dress is white, with a sash that ties
at the waist, cinched just so.
I did not know how soon I would be forced out of that childhood.

Had I only known then what I know now
I wouldn't have blamed her,
wouldn't have condemned her,
wouldn't have muffled her sobs
under a thick pillow.

I wouldn't have hated her.

I want to say to that girl,
it wasn't your fault;
how could you have known that
some people are like the dolls you play with,
life-like, but with no heart?
I want to say these things to her, but I can't.
I forced that little girl out of me a long time ago,
and I have been looking for her ever since.

Belinda Yu

Glass Words

I save
The shards of your
Broken phrases
And keep them in a pasteboard box.

When you are gone,
I hold them in the light.
Something about my hands
Turns them brilliant red.
I don't know why.

Hannah Star Rogers

untitled

you said i looked disheveled
so i turned away politely
satellitely picking lent from your corduroy purple chair.
'what news,' you must have said,
'indeed' i would rebuke,
like diamonds on a driveway blinding junkies from the truth;
'eat cheesecake,' you want to ask me?
'yes, but not professionally --
my business is debauchery and does not leave room for fats,
besides the globe is hungry,' or so i'd thought if you had asked.
'the night thaws soon,' observeth you with a flash of debonair
as you untie the scintillating locks of your vanilla root beer hair.
'i wonder if i might have a drink', my betraying tum-tum gasped
to which you quick replied:
'i think i'd prefer the cheesecake if you don't exactly mind'.
ahh at last that question
"like a beacon in the night"
cliche wrapped in terrycloth now left barren in the light --
one hand shuffles matchsticks as you scratch-eye with the other
'what now,' i wonder
wondering around your cell
which, if i'd never been before, i'd've mistaken for my hell:
calculated kaleidoscopic karaoke eclectics
adorned your every roach canal like nightmarishness in narcoleptics.
"do not go quietly" i hear ring-ranging in my ear,
'what's that' you say?
'nothing but the wind slicing open unsaid fears'.
i think you thought me mental and indeed you had it right
for my thoughts were centered elsewhere on that blue cerebral night:
what if a thousand lions had a raffle for a treat
and settled unanimalisticly on my belly as their meat
super carnivouraginistic expletive infested notions
would play about my wet wood skull like hockey pucks in oceans
plumming to the hairy floor below the jaundiced sky
while dingoes saluted uncle sam by microwaving apple pies --
at least that was what i had in mind
before you dropped the book and stared into my eye:
'i'm all sold out of root beer, if that's what you are thinking'
and indeed i had been before you started positively tiddlywinking away
the barter for a bum scratch on the table of the night.
'yes, i was thinking of root beer' my heart at last exclaimed,
'but i think you've got a head full and i won't stand to be restrained.'

to which you hastily responded 'good heavens have you lost your mind'?
'i know not when i ever had it' romantically i cried

and nearly finally absconded
with those tresses of sweet soda mane
that pour down from your yellow brain
like breezes on an afternoon less lonesome than this night.
and so it goes that i near laid down the roadblock of our kind
by taking hold your splendid mop and making it one with mine,
but, alas, i cannot reminisce too long for a faint but nag suspicion
that dessert's not all you meant 'cheesecake' and you too are biding time
until the worn-out words between us may at last lay down
and leave us free of the roadmaps in our minds.

Peter Jordan

---

the fall.

i don't know.
when it was
exactly when we
broke and how we
continue on with a
stitched up semblance of
a seam a pretend
patch which threatens
to disintegrate at
a moment's notice our
calm collected voices
our words about
the weather and
my studies putting
on this facade this
play for so long
now we cease
to be actors instead
believing in the lie
that is living this
make believe
so very different
from the games we
would play when the
only thought was
daddy
is
perfect.

Shannon Rosati

A Story of the Baptism

On the day I was baptized, it was hot and I stood by the river trying to keep cool. The throngs of people were making me edgy. Two women waiting beside me chattered in my ear and I kept hearing snippets of their conversation.

"Did you hear that Isaac sold his goat for three...?"

"and then my husband, lazy piece of..."

"...John healed a man possessed by a demon, I've heard."

The man in front of me moved to argue with them and when his head moved, suddenly I caught a glimpse of John, the baptizer. He was wearing camel's hair and a leather belt around his hips. His body glistened with sweat. Water from the dipping had splashed up onto his legs and it caught on his thick leg hair as it ran down in rivulets. Watching him, something wrenched inside me, like a key turning inside a lock.

At once, it was my turn and I stepped up to repent and admit my wrongs. He gripped my shoulders with his hands and pressed me down into the water. As the current flowed into my ears, the noise of the crowd subsided to a water-logged murmur. The semi-silence was eerie. I closed my eyes beneath the water and, in that moment, I saw a bright image of a man's body against the blackness of my eyelids. His voice caressed me,

"You are the beloved one. In you I have delighted."

I sucked in air as I emerged. John's face bent near mine and I could smell the wild honey on his breath. As he pulled me out of the water, muscles tensing, I felt a spirit, like a dove's wings, descend into me, fluttering through my stomach and down into my loins, where the wings shuddered once, then opened for flight. My world was torn open.

I started to run, stumbling away from him, water dragging my every step. When I reached the waiting people, they scattered. One man tried to grab me, thinking, I guess, that I had stolen something, but snatched air. I had reached the sand and could stretch my legs into a full sprint. The rocks pressed sharp into my bare feet. The pain felt good. I ran until my lungs felt as if they would explode from the pressure and I doubled over from the cramp in my side. My breath came in short gasps.

The man I had seen beneath the water was John.

"I will stay here," I said to the brambles, "until this urge leaves me."

Natalie Phillips

A to East

All I can do is keep walking. One foot in front of the other—in the distance the mountains are clear and hold my eyes, pulling me forward across the dusty ground. My steps are long, fluid. I can feel gravel from the road through the soles of my shoes but I ignore it, let my legs stretch into their new stride. I wonder if this walk has been mine all along, just bound up by small rooms, cramped onto sidewalks. Now the city is invisible behind me and the mountains lie ahead. I do not look back.

Blackbirds blossom like smoke into the grey sky. Their wings flash sharp edges, like the shadows of your hands against the kitchen's white linoleum floor. I flinch from the flashes of sun on their feathers, from the memory of your hands. This morning the sun came through the kitchen window and fell hard against the floor. I tried to catch it, lift it up, but the light just twisted through my fingers and would not change.

"Change," said another man, on a different morning, in the streets of our city where my heels click and grate on the concrete. "Change," he said, but I was on my way to meet you, and didn't have the time, and didn't stop. You didn't change then, or any time you promised after that. The hands of the man on the street were dirty, curled around a bottle hidden in a paper bag. They scared me less than yours, less than your short, clean nails and veins clear under the skin, so carefully drawn.

Dawn has passed. The light from the window has slid across the floor and disappeared—so have I. I didn't leave you a note; I am tired of writing your name. Instead I cleaned all the white countertops and washed the white floor, erasing the stains of your coffee and carelessness. In the shower I scrubbed each inch of skin and covered the marks that remained with my clothes, but no makeup. I wanted to feel clean, but the house still held too much of you. I went to the window and looked east.

East is where the mountains are, where they rise up blue and more distant than they seem, I know, but I'll just keep on walking. Sometimes I shut my eyes and feel each step leaving you behind, leaving the house, the kitchen floor, the window and white counter tops. It's afternoon and I've been walking for hours, but finally the land has begun to rise. We lived in a flat city, all sidewalks and no hills. I am using new muscles now, and everything around me is green.

Erin Blevins

Eva

Katherine Thompson

It was he who tempted you.

Some enchanted evening in 1944 you met a perfect stranger.
As the war of the world spiraled closer to hell,
he promised you Eden
you couldn't say no.

I imagine your eyes farewelled with tears
as you abandoned Swedish snow
for sullen Alabama storms,
tied your princess waist into an apron
and taught yourself to make soft-boiled eggs
because he liked them.
Your first girlchild stirred inside you as you learned
hard-boiled, scrambled, sunnysides up and down.
By the time the second came you had mastered the precision
of soufflé and omelet. You made breakfasts fit for the king he wasn't
for the princess you had been.

Your white knight left you lonely through innumerable black nights,
strictly business,
and you were left with the children to keep,
the appearances to uphold.
You melted in the heat of southern Christmases,
the winters without cold
unmade you. Your sunflower girls grew
in the warmth of those winters, bright and blonde,
the younger begetting me: second generation sundaughter.

More than fifty years now
and you still cater to this whim of a husband.
You once believed you loved him.
Your babies always loved him.
Their babies never loved him.

And you spend your silent life
coloring his world beautiful
so he can die believing that this is Eden
and that you are not day by day undone.

Cloe's Slave Cemetery

The baby is crying again, and this time she is sure that it's the baby.

Cloe rises from her seat, pulling her gaze away from the rocky and unpretty hill. She had been listening, waiting to see if the girl would call out to her—dreaming more than anything else: When anyone ever asked what she was doing looking out the window all day, she always told them *Nothin. Just daydreamin.* But Mama warned her that she can't be so absent minded no more, now with the baby and all. *Any mother who dreams all day is no kind of mother at all*, Mama said. So Cloe hurries over to the baby's crib. Picks him up and bounces him on her bosom. She says things like *Ssh, quiet now*, and *Ssh, Mama's here* in her soft Mama voice that stays in her chest, soft and warm like a baking oven. The baby hasn't wet himself, which is good because Cloe wants to put off asking Jack for diaper money for one more day. Of course Jack is the one that wanted the baby in the first place, even though Cloe told him that she didn't want no baby just yet. He shouldn't complain about how much diapers and formula cost because the only thing he has to do for the baby is go to work to make money to buy stuff for it and maybe play with it when he gets the feeling to. *Don't you want us to be a family, Cloe baby? Don't you want us to be happy?* She raised her legs, first to let him inside, and then to let the baby get out. She waited to be made happy by it all, real excited, like the way she used to lean forward and wait for the movie to start when the lights went out in the theater and Jack would hold her hand.

Cloe loves the baby—she loves it as much as she can love something that eats, poops, cries and sleeps all the time. Sometimes Jack plays with the baby when he gets home from work, and that makes Cloe smile. But except when Jack plays with him, or when Mama shows Cloe a new trick to get him to go to sleep, the baby doesn't really excite Cloe. So she feeds him, cleans him, loves him when he cries, and puts him to sleep. And then, every afternoon (unless Mama is visiting), Cloe sits down in her chair, rests her elbows on the wooden windowsill, and looks out at the small slave's cemetery that rolls down the hill like it's trying to hide from anyone who knows about it.

Soon after she and Jack were married, Jack's sister began visiting Cloe a couple times a month. Jack's sister would take her coffee black and join Cloe in looking out the window. *You know what we looking at, don't you, Cloe?* she asked one afternoon.

Huh-uh.

Jack's sister laughed with her whole body. Even put down her coffee to slap her fat, black knee. *Whoo, chile! You mean Jack didn't tell you bout that hill?*

No. What is it?

Jack's sister's body stopped laughing and she picked up her coffee. She looked at Cloe over her glasses, real serious-like. *Cloe, that's an old cemetery—for slaves I mean.*

A cemetery?

Hm-mm.

But there ain't——

Course there ain't no markers there. Just a buncha shallow graves is all. It's quiet-kept, but true. Jack's sister is a sorta busy-body and just about everything she knows is quiet-kept, but oftentimes it's also true. Cloe did not want to believe that she was living next to a slave's cemetery, but she could find no reason to doubt her sister-in-law. Over the few months since that afternoon, Cloe has grown used to the idea that dead slaves are buried right outside her window.

She feeds the baby from his bottle and sits back in her chair. She remembers the argument she had with Mama when Cloe told her that she will not breastfeed the baby. The thought of the baby sucking milk from her body made her feel ill. Mama went and got Jack on her side—*Son, a baby needs his mother's milk to grow right.* Since Jack and Mama usedta not get along too well, he was eager to join her cause in order to make some peace. He told Cloe that her breastmilk was the most healthy food for the baby, and that she could save the family some money since she would not have to buy formula every week. One night when the baby was crying and he kept bothering her about breastfeeding, she told him *Why don't you let him suck on your tits, then*! Since then Jack has not brought up breastfeeding. Just complains about how much formula costs.

The knock at the door startles her because no one ever visits except Mama and Jack's sister and she is not expecting either of them today. Cloe walks to the door, managing to keep the bottle's nipple in the baby's sucking mouth. *Who is it?* she asks.

An old woman's voice, kind and slow. *Cloe baby, let me on inside.*

Cloe opens the door. The old woman is light skinned and very short. Her white afro is brushed back into a wiry nest, leaving her face naked and pretty. She is missing a few teeth, but she smiles anyway and Cloe lets her in.

That baby giving you trouble, Cloe? The old woman looks around the small living room like Mama did when she first visited. She makes her slow way through the house, leaving on her ankle-length, faded red coat. Cloe imagines that the coat must have been very pretty and bright red years ago, when the woman's wiry hair was fire-red right along with her coat, and her lipstick matched them both. Cloe imagines that the old woman has traveled to many places, and has grown old learning whatever it is that she has stopped by to tell Cloe.

No ma'am. No trouble at all. She takes the nipple from the baby's mouth, places the bottle on the table, and begins to burp him. She follows the old woman through the house. *Sometimes I just wish the baby was better company, you know?*

The old woman nods, understands, and makes her way to Cloe's seat by the window. *That's sure a pretty view. Mind if I sit down?*

No, please do. Can I get you something to drink? We got some iced tea made up.

No, but thank you, Cloe baby. I think I just need to rest my feet right now. Cloe imagines again that the old woman is tired from traveling; maybe she is visiting Cloe to tell her stories of the faraway places she has been in her faded red coat.

You have children? Cloe asks, mainly because she does not know what else to ask an old woman.

Yes indeed. Done raised five of mine own, and eight more after that. The woman laughs with her lips pressed together, the way old ladies do when they lean their heads back and think that the whole world is just so precious. *You know how tired I am, Cloe baby! Thirteen chir'n ain't nobody's lucky draw!*

Cloe shares a laugh with her guest. *You right! I just got one and it's a handful.* She begins to bounce the baby again. Lord knows if the baby starts crying and fussing while this woman is visiting, she will just die.

Yeah, but you goan have more, the old woman says, nodding her head. *Don't no man's wife have just one chile. I should know.*

Cloe has nothing to say to that, so she busies herself with bouncing the baby on her bosom.

You know what we lookin at, don't you?

Cloe is grateful for the change of subject. She gets tired of always talking about babies, and that seems to be all anyone ever talks about. *Yes ma'am, I know what we lookin at. It's a slaves' cemetery.*

Who told you that?

Jack's sister.

Well, Jack's sister got it half-right. The old woman pulls her coat tighter, like she just caught a draft. *There ain't but one slave buried in that hill. And it's holy ground.*

Really?

True as I'm sitting here.

Who's buried there? Do you know?

The woman looks at Cloe. *It's a girl, Cloe baby, 'bout thirteen years old.*

It's holy ground?

Yes indeed. The slave girl had one baby when she was twelve and was havin' another one when she passed on.

Did the baby live?

She gave up the baby before she passed on. Both her chir'n was sold.

Oh... Cloe imagines a screaming slave girl, dying while a baby comes out from between her legs. Giving her life away to something so willing to take it. She imagines that the young girl knew she was dying, and lie on her back with her legs raised, eyes shut, and fists clenched, fighting against everything that was coming to be between her legs. The slave girl knew she was dying, and her sold slavebaby would be none the better or worse off for it.

You don't seem much surprised by what I just told you, Cloe baby, the old woman remarks. *A body telling you that there's a slave girl buried right outside your window don't seem to trouble you at all.* She widens her eyes; she wants an explanation.

Cloe thinks for a moment. She can trust this old woman who seems to understand everything. *I think I hear her sometimes*, Cloe confesses. It's the first time she's ever told anyone. *I never knew what it was, but I thought it was something to do with the cemetery. It's always a girl's voice I hear. Screamin' and cryin'. Always the same.*

This seems to be the answer the woman expected, and she nods. *I figured you could hear her. That's why I came to see you, Cloe baby.* The woman leans forward. Almond eyes peer deep. Hers is a face of forgiveness. *You love your baby, don't you?*

Yes ma'am.

But you ain't want to have no baby just yet, did you?

Cloe does not answer.

Jack got you into it.

She puts her head down. The baby whimpers.

Don't feel bad, Cloe baby, the woman says, and then tells her again, *That's holy ground out there. Have you talked to the slave girl?*

No ma'am.

Well you should, the old woman says firmly. *That's why she be screamin' and keepin' you awake at night: cause you won't talk to her. You'd rather cover your ears and be scared. Hmph. Shutting your eyes tight cause some nights you think she gets into your and Jack's bedroom.*

Cloe does not think it matters how this old woman knows that she covers her ears and shuts her eyes against the slave mothergirl's midnight screaming. She wants to talk to the girl and maybe the old woman will tell her how. *I don't know what to say to her*, she says. *What do I say?* She can feel her heart coming to life, a deep thumping in her chest.

Tell her whatever it is that you got to say to her.

But I don't got nothin'——

Yes you do, Cloe baby. If you didn't have nothin' to say to her, then she wouldn't be screamin' out to you all night. And I wouldn't be here. The old woman finally reaches for the baby, gently telling Cloe, *You can go out there now. It's all right.*

Cloe hands the baby to the woman. She makes her way to the kitchen's back door. The wooden floor creaks beneath her footsteps, and she wonders if the floor has always creaked or if her legs are as heavy as they suddenly feel. She has been out on the back hill only twice before, both times with Jack all the while telling her that there ain't nothing wrong with this hill here and his sister don't know what she's talkin' 'bout.

The dirt is hard and rocky beneath her feet, but Cloe thinks it would be rude for her to go inside and put on her shoes. *This is holy ground.* She looks through the window for the nice old woman to point her where to go, but the woman is busy playing with the baby. She will have to find it herself.

Cloe listens for the slave girl's voice, for her dying and birthing screams. Her heart pounds deep within her chest, but her hands do not shake. She kneels next to a rooted tree stump and puts her lips to the ground. Kisses the earth to taste, grabs at patches of dust and gravel to feel. She shuts her eyes to see and breathes deeply to inhale the stench of a forgotten desperation. And she listens, waiting for a voice to rise from beneath the chaos of her own fatigue.

It is not long before the slave girl calls. And she calls from far below. From deep within. A long moaning that resonates from a past too soon buried.

Cloe answers. When the girl responds, she cries. She sobs her questions, cries her confessions. Like anyone's most fervent prayer, Cloe seeks answers. The mothergirl moans her answer, but it cannot be right. *I can't I can't do that* Cloe screams into the earth. She pounds the grave for an answer she can accept. Cloe weeps—like an abandoned child, until the slave girl's pain becomes her own. The buried mothergirl does not change her answer. Screamed in repetition, her answer becomes the truth. Cloe comes to understand. She rises from the rocky ground and wipes her tears with fistfuls of barren soil...

While the officer is reading her rights, all Cloe can think about is that the handcuffs are much too tight. When they ask her why her face and hands are covered with dirt, she cannot think of how to explain it to them. She does not know where the old woman went, or when someone strangled the baby, leaving its neck black and swollen. She doesn't think the old woman could have done such a thing.

There is dirt pressed in the baby's broken neck and blood, drying thick and dark on the corner of its mouth. There is some blood on Cloe's housedress, but not much. The police speak softly, talking mainly about the rocks and dirt on her chair by the window and the bloody soil drying on her trembling, cuffed hands. From somewhere behind her, she can hear Jack's muffled sobbing. As quickly as they arrived after Jack got home from work, some of the police officers leave. They do not have to push down her head because she steps into the backseat of the police car without fussing. Their cars carry her to where more men with guns will be waiting, and the sirens sound to Cloe like the screams of a dying slave girl, buried too soon beneath a barren patch of holy ground.

Rawn M. James, Jr.

Defenseless

Hilarie Lloyd

I am loaded to start the conversation we never had.
I'd fire it off at you like a machine gun,
you wouldn't have to speak, your mind
would be all over the wall.

I resent your tragic father-daughter secrets -
the trail of empty beer cans down
to the trailer, where the pungent
grass grows into points, stars
that make you a regular old
marijuana sheriff.

I'd explode the cesspool jars
you taught over with tainted teeth.
The unstirred Medusa eyes hung dull at me
after school from your cabinets,
sour socketballs with the soft suck
of the olives we ate at home.

Your shrunken stink of alcohol has never left me.
Wet, yet waterless, open-mouthed silences
gape, suspended in a glass grave.
Still Shocked. Still shocked.

I lean forward and toss bombshells
into whatever holes
I can find.

The Hot Zone

A morning of promise shed a sky the color
of depression, and the mist of an invisible
rain made tangible the slump of the afternoon.
I was one slow, sopping foot after the other –
slapping through puddles and their children –

One of the monsters had snatched my baby,
those that skulk through the streets
(or sometimes lurk in the silent shadows of trees) –
hungry, so hungry, waiting to pounce on a
helpless baby. An innocent baby. My baby.

My forward movement was a trudge, in which
I found considerable time for reflection.
What if, I mused, the monster wasn't so bad?
What if instead of being monstrous all the time,
sometimes he'd take a breather – read a book.
Enjoy music. I imagined the monster in a
smoker's jacket sipping from a brandy snifter,
and this small laugh sustained me until

I found her. She was the last one.
And a grumpy monster was sitting
right beside her. Two feet away. Three.
Nervous, in case the monster viewed me
as a threat (I was just here for my baby),
I slowed my trudge and began to edge
towards her and him. There was no sound.
I couldn't help but glance at the monster
as I came between him and my baby –
right when he formed a Cheshire grin. Oh,
how I wanted so badly to tear it from him,
to dash it upon the ground, to let the sky
and the rain cast their judgment upon his
broken and bleeding face.

My baby and I were on the way home
in the rain when we saw another monster.
This one was returning fresh from a kill,
dragging its prey behind it.
My baby started a low moan,
a lament for the dead and powerless.
I smelled defeat through the rain,
tainting the taste of any brandy
I might ever drink, or imagine.

Ben Morris

Horror

One day my husband came home when I was certain he wasn't going to. What happened was, someone stole his wallet. Someone his age.

I had been sleepwalking. I was aware of what I was doing. I thought of myself as a madwoman. That's how it was.

He talked that morning about my softness like I imagine a farmer might talk about an animal he was going to eat or breed. I said that my softness reminded me that I could have children. "And what about that?" he said.

It was seven thirty am and he was drinking Coca Cola. I looked at his gut poking out over his pants. I thought of his gut as angry.

He left and when he left he left the garage door open and I went out in my slippers in the cold and closed the door. The cold then reminded me of his hand on my knee the previous Saturday when we were at dinner with a couple we referred to as friends. I hadn't been hungry.

When I was a child I could not imagine what "all the days of my life" meant. Now the thought of it made me shudder, made me have nightmares about traveling forever on a deserted road to the former capitol of a fallen country.

What is a bad marriage? How is bad? Is it bad like something that must be fixed, like bad brakes? Is it bad like bad fruit that spoils everything is touches? Or like a bad knee. A trick.

He doesn't know me.

I was at home, of course. I hadn't played the cello in months. I was making an apple tart, not a pie. The crust was flavored with almond essence and I was making it in a glass dish with sour apples. I had made stewed lamb flavored with plums. It had been a success at our last dinner party, but I had already begun not to care.

They called and wanted me to identify. I can't remember if it was man or a woman. Was he a donor? There was no driver's license.

I got down on the floor, on the expensive stone flags in our kitchen, in a heap, as I had seen a grieving character in a movie do.

Amy Vyas

green shorts.

the shorts were. i
did not know how
they came to be.
(there in
the bottom of my
fifth suitcase–the
fifth one, right after the
small tote bag) there.
but they were.
they were green.
they were not mine.
(i knew, but tried them on
to pretend anyway
that they were)
they are yours. at
least they were. before they
were here. with me. alone.
mine. and on my body.
i thought to myself–
they look less
green now. maybe when they
were on your body
in the ocean they changed
their color. maybe
the salt that stuck
to your skin (it left
that white smear
running down
your neck that tasted
oceany) transformed
your shorts. made
them the green
that i wear now. alone. instead
of the green that hung
right there, below
your abdomen. they don't fit
me like that. they don't fit. like
you did. inside me. in the ocean.
(you didn't say i
was salty) and in the sand.
i wonder if that
fades too. the way we fit. like
the green did.

Shannon Rosati

Daughter

When Stella exercises she pretends she is a wrestler who has to suck weight for an upcoming match. Daddy used to be a wrestler. He still has his rubber suit. His rubber suit is probably hanging in his closet in Cleveland. Stella runs and runs. Her stomach bounces a little. Her legs are stiff but they still climb hills and plod along. She feels the sweat drip off her forehead and imagines that it hisses and boils when it hits the hot pavement. Her head is light; she's floating. The heat makes her nauseous. This is a good thing.

Mama is talking to Rita on the phone about pet shows. Mama breeds show dogs.

"Oh yes," Mama agrees, resting an unadorned hand on her chest. Her breasts are like two mounds of dough. "Walking is very important for show dogs . . . ."

Stella listens to her mother talk and picks at a pink strawberry scab on her knee until it bleeds. In her dreams she is sleek and beautiful and in a pet show. She sticks her finger out of her cage so people can touch it and feel how skinny she is.

Daddy used to take Mama to pet shows. But that was before he moved to Cleveland.

Stella remembers the first time she went into Daddy's office. She wore black shiny shoes and a yellow dress that Mama made just for her. She remembers pushing open the heavy wooden doors leading to the reception area. Janet, his secretary, was at her desk. Janet had curly red hair. Stella smiled and curtsied, and Janet said, "Oh, isn't she the cutest," and made clackety-clack sounds with her keyboard.

****

Riding blows cool wind against her face. She imagines her father is at the end of the driveway, calling her. She stands up and leans over the handlebars, her pumping calves like pistons.

"My mom says I should work in sales because I'm pretty," Marjorie says, flashing a toothpaste smile. The two of them are sitting on Stella's bed. Stella wraps her arms around her chest. She could feel her fatness. She wanted to feel her ribs, bony and separated under her cotton shirt. Marjorie starts talking about boys and rolls on top of the mattress as she laughs. Marjorie is a Thin Girl with blonde hair and tight jeans. When the girls went shopping today, Marjorie bought a pair of Calvins for seventy-eight dollars. Those jeans sit folded in a silver bag under Stella's bed. Marjorie giggles and raises her eyebrows while she tells stories. Stella cracks jokes because Fat Girls are funny. Marjorie leaves and they hug (Stella feels the bones and muscles of her Thin Girl back), and she forgets her jeans in the silver bag.

After Marjorie leaves, Stella pulls the jeans out and touches the inseams and belt loops. She stands in front of the mirror and takes a good look. Today she ate only a little, but she can't feel her ribs yet. The girl in the mirror undresses until she is nothing but soft flesh and underwear. She unrolls the jeans in front of her knees and takes two careful steps into the leg holes. She pulls them up and sucks in her breath until her lungs burn. No. No. She is still a Fat Girl. Quickly, she yanks them off and stuffs them down in the bottom of the bag. They leave a snug feeling across her buttocks.

Stella works in the paint department at the hardware store. She helps people choose the color of their master bedrooms and gives advice on refinishing hope chests. Marjorie used to work there but she quit when her boyfriend got fired. That was before Stella met Eliot from the Blinds and Lighting Aisle. He made all the difference.

The hardware store looms big and blue over the turnpike. Stella parks in the back and ties her apron around her waist (she actually has a waist now) as she sprints to the door. She tries to sprint places as much as she can now.

Eliot greets her. "Good afternoon," he sings. And Stella smiles at him and his bad skin and his nose ring that he keeps turned up inside his nostrils so he doesn't disturb the customers.

"I need to show you something," he says and steers her by her left arm. They walk over to a woman standing in the paint department.

"What are you looking for?" Stella asks in her friendly voice.

The old woman tilts her head. "Hello, dear." Her hair is white and thinning. Her blue eyes are almost clear. "I ran out of paint. I need another can."

Eliot walks over to the computer. "Can you tell me the name of the color?"

The woman furrows her brow. "No, no," she shakes her head. "I can't remember exactly, but it looks like this." She sticks out her palms to Stella, who notices that they are completely

covered in lemon yellow paint.

Stella covers her laugh with her hand. "Oh Jesus," she says under her breath and leaves.

Eliot bends over the painted hands and scratches his chin. "Did the can have a sticker on top?" His eyes follow Stella's departure. He turns and searches the shelves.

Later, he says, "You could have stayed and helped, you know."

Stella is grumpy. "Sure, Mr. Employee of the Month. Just try and pretend that she didn't have a screw loose."

Eliot starts tickling her and she screams, "Eliot, stop that right now, Eliot."

They leave work early in Stella's car that has rust holes on the hood and goes only forty on the turnpike.

Once Daddy had to lose fifteen pounds in four days in college. He sat around in a sauna all day and didn't eat anything for three days and didn't drink anything for two. Stella tries to do this and faints in the middle of her step aerobics tape. Daddy was good at losing weight. But that was before he brought Janet over to the house and announced that he was moving to Cleveland. He stood glowing and tall in the hallway with Janet-the-Redhead-the-Thin-Girl-with-the-Beautiful-Fingernails beside him in all her glory. And she looked down at Stella who was crying and said, "Hope your mom takes you to some pet shows, kid."

Stella sees Marjorie on Saturday. Stella is sad and tired so she lies on her side on the old couch in the basement. Marjorie is talking about boys. She squeals and gives Stella a hug. She lays her blonde head against Stella's rib cage. "Whoa," she says, "You're really bony there!"

Stella buys a train ticket to Cleveland and dyes her hair red. She stands in front of the mirror and admires the curves of the green dress. She picks up the telephone with her pearly fingernails and calls Eliot.

"I'm getting ready to leave."

"Where are you going?"

"Cleveland . . . You know, my dad."

"Oh. He knows you're coming?"

"Oh yeah. He can't wait to see me."

He laughs.

"What?" She asks in her soft Janet voice.

"You're a product of divorce."

"So, do you like me any less?"

"No."

"Good."

"Don't go."

Stella looks in the mirror again. If she stretches she can see the outline of her ribs through the emerald fabric. "You can't stop me."

Silence.

"Call me," he says.

"Maybe."

She hangs up.

Alison Niebanck

modern American male

what loss, i wonder, what blood
or threat of blood to wake me to my fears;

i cannot say, express, beyond a tremble in my voice
which says words a tenth of what i mean and that tremble
says it all but it's not heard, i would not allow an utterance
of what i mean to be heard, lest it might communicate
the respect and awe for the respect i feel.

words i cannot say to my grandfather,
and those i would adopt as such,
"I respect you," but respect could not be made to mean
just exactly what i mean.

the words i cannot say to my father:
"dad, I love you," seems so lacking:
"love" is something i say to women.
it does not have the weight.

(it is in his voice as well,
in his tremble, when he is angry but only wants to say
how proud he is of me, and on the phone
when we're talking of nothing at all)

it is as though my tongue is knots and if i spoke the words
they might as well be lies,
the comparison between the words, so small,
and the truth i wish i could begin to say.

Aaron Greenblatt

Hotel Blues

In a hotel room in Paris, a family of four listened to a television show that none of them could understand, although it was an American program. The actors' voices had been dubbed over, and every so often the boy and the girl would laugh in high-pitched, nervous bursts at the jabbering French dialogue. The television set was old and small and its screen was dusty. The parents were lying on the plaid covers of one of the two beds, their arms shielding the afternoon sun from their eyes. The skirt of the mother's wrinkled grey suit was creeping up her bent legs, past her knees, and the boy, who was fifteen, glanced at her once in a while. The girl was thirteen and didn't want to mention her mother's skirt in front of her stepbrother. Instead, she kept her eyes on the screen – although she knew the boy was looking at her mother. The father had his back to his wife, and he did not notice anything, except that he was tired and that his pants were sweaty, and he wished that his kids would turn the television off and go away. They had been at the hotel for a total of thirty minutes. In Paris, it was nearly dinnertime, and traffic noise had increased accordingly. High heels clicking down sidewalks, dogs fighting, cars dodging each other on the narrow streets, commuters and pedestrians talking, shouting, talking, jabbering...

"Shut up!" said the father. The boy and the girl looked at each other.

"What?" asked the girl.

"I mean, the T.V. Turn the damned thing off. I can't stand to hear it anymore." He buried his head in one of pillows – or tried to. The pillow was decidedly hard, and flat. So instead he put it over his dark-haired head, shutting his eyes as tightly as possible. If only he could shut his ears as well and go to sleep...

The boy got up from his chair and crept towards the television, turning it off with a cautious twist of his hand. The mother twitched slightly, causing a foot to dangle off the bed.

The girl jumped up and went to the window. Through the slightly cracked pane she saw people walking past the shops and delis; most of them were dressed in black. Although it was summer, few were wearing shorts. Many women had on suits very much like the one her mother wore.

She turned and looked at the boy, then looked at her mother's skirt hem. It was indecent. She had to say something.

"George, stop looking!"

The boy jerked his head away. "Looking at what?" His cheeks were the color of the pale pink sheets on the beds. He fiddled with his watch.

The father sat upright, regarding his wife, then his two children – both of whom were flushed. He took out his wallet, and wincing at the foreign bills – what was the exchange rate for francs? – took out several, folded them, and handed them to his son.

"Go and get some food, you two. Come back in an hour. If you get lost, call. You have the number." He sat on the edge of the bed and rubbed his eyes, straightened his loosened blue tie.

The children left, squabbling over who got to keep the money ("Divide it in half! That's only fair!" "He gave to me, and I'm older!"). The father put his hand on his wife's hip and shook her. "Are you hungry, Marie?"

The woman turned over, pulling down her skirt. He watched the material skim over the perfectly matched legs.

"Marie, you shouldn't sleep like that when George is around. He's getting older."

She opened her eyes, wide. They were pigeon gray and rimmed with long lashes. "You have a sick mind. He's only a boy."

"He's sixteen and he was looking at you, all right. I think Alice noticed. She said something about it." He shifted his body, his hand still on his wife. He noticed how warm she felt. Perhaps it was from napping in the sun.

She lay still, stiff as a pole. She examined the ceiling, which was whitewashed and crumbling, with irregular brown stains that looked like birthmarks. She had a birthmark on her inner

thigh, the size of a child's small foot. When her husband had first made love to her, he had caressed that mark over and over, with his hands and then his lips. She had asked him why and he replied that it felt baby soft, silkier than the rest of her skin...

"I've seen you watch my daughter." Her voice had none of its customary peaks and round syllables. As if it were a dune, flattened by the ocean.

He removed his hand. "Marie, she's a girl. And your daughter."

"I've seen you," she repeated, her arms behind her neck.

They heard loud voices outside; a fight seemed to be breaking out on the street, between a woman and a man. A dog began to bark.

The father got to his feet, closed the window. "Goddamned city. Too noisy."

"This trip was your brilliant whim. Remember?"

He came over to his wife, bent down to kiss her.

"I'm too tired." She pushed at her husband's body. Ignoring her, he slid his hand up her leg, finding the birthmark that was smoother than a child's skin, scratching it with the hair on the backs of his hands.

The boy and the girl returned thirty minutes after their father had sent them away. They had found a McDonald's around the corner, next to a lingerie shop and a magazine store. Their meal, during which they had made no eye contact, was silent and quick. On their way back, they had taken the route that avoided the lingerie shop, only to run into a couple kissing in an alley. Their mouths...

The girl tried the knob. "It's locked."

The boy's eyes dropped down, and she wondered what he was looking at, maybe a splotch of cheeseburger on her shirt from dinner. She suddenly became conscious of her sweaty breasts, round and trembling – like the water balloons she and her real father used to throw at each other. She remembered the way her father squeezed the tied ends of the balloons, cupping them to his wet body and kneading them with his fingers.

She hugged one arm to her chest and took out a pink plastic key-chain. She unlocked the door.

Despite the dim light, they could see the position of their parents' sleeping bodies. The father wore only his unbuttoned shirt, and the mother's lace panties dangled from one of her slim ankles. Her skin glistened faintly. The crease of her posterior was clearly defined; one soft leg held down her husband's knee. Her breasts were hidden, suggested only by a slight curve of the flesh beneath one arm. The man was partially covered by the fetal curl of his wife's body. His hairy legs were pressed together, and his hand gripped her waist.

The boy closed the door. He and the girl stood outside the room, facing the opposite wall. It was even darker in the hallway. They could barely see the faint pattern of the wallpaper – like yellow lace – but they could hear each other's quick breathing.

After some minutes, the girl sensed the boy stirring beside her. His arm moved – it was moving towards her blue t-shirt. She did not respond. She was immobile, except for the quivering of her breasts. It was not new to her, a hand feeling her skin under her shirt. She shut her eyes, pressing against the wall. A sour taste of cheese and meat crept up her throat. The boy began to groan, softly.

The door opened. The girl saw the father, screamed, and ran down the hallway.

Dressed in his wrinkled clothes, he looked down at his son. Their eyes met, and they were silent. They went inside and turned on the television, the sound low. The mother, now covered by a sheet, was still asleep.

Outside, a dog continued barking.

Jennifer Oh

Random Blessings

Missy Walker

Rosy thoughts
of late mid-afternoon
nip tree tops
with pink light
as the sun slants down,

and I wonder what
the sitter watches
in a day on the bench
by the stairs. She pauses
only in thought

as I pass her by
as if sitting were contentment,
as if the random blessings tried
between strangers were enough
(*Gesundheit* to a sneeze; and, *good-bye*)

to sustain a life.
Is there any closeness
more than this? And why
would she bother
if there were not

to fill the holes in the silence with her cough,
breathing still as the wind
puckered up around her dress,
to turn on an old lady's whim
and say to me, *God bless you.*

What I would try to save

I thought you were a Nazi
because that was the only way the teachers
talked about Germans. I had no idea
what I was saying, making my mother
into something she was not, a daughter
giving birth incorrectly to her mother's identity.
I could not understand,
in my eight year old mind,
the differences between a mother carving
a child from her belly and a Nazi slicing
a family into parts. I had no vocabulary
to understand what it meant to be born
into war. I had no way to interpret
the screams of my grandfather,
insisting *The Germans are coming.*
I had no way to feel whipped
into my skin to the point of wanting
to die if that would mean the pain would stop.
I am lucky, part of a generation
who has never known war on our own soil,
outside our houses, in our fields,
raping our women.
We have never known a time
when we could not be triumphant.
Now that I am older, I feel too white,
too innocent in distance from a form of life
that respects truth and honor
if that is all that you can still cling
to once they have stripped you
of your identity as a Pole, a Jew, a human being.
We have slept too soundly in our beds,
never awoken to whispers in the dark
insisting *They are coming, they are coming.*
It is only now that I know
they have always been coming for me,
winding up through my history and my family,
trying to kill those who have given rise to me,
trying to stunt my life from being what it has become
-a Polack too free
-a woman too literate
-a human too joyous.
Sometimes I can see myself in that field, with you,

digging potatoes with our family,
because that was all we could ever expect from life.
At night we would dream about cream and cookies,
finery laid out before us, inviting us to leave,
if only for awhile, the distant thunders
of the bombs falling beyond the valley.
I would have been one of the weak.
I would not have known I held power
in my hands, in my words, not knowing
I could save bodies cast off into the forgotten
ditches by the side of the road,
the power enough to drag
those bodies to a place of safety
on paper, with words, spilling their blood, that red ink,
along the way if only I could save just one.
Instead, I would have been that girl too afraid
to speak up, to fight, to stop watching
the intense beauty of war,
that godly control of mortality
revealing itself right in front of her,
that divine unraveling of life
when the mortal is thrown effortlessly
into the immortal sky, dark with blood and dust
in the revealing of secrets humans
are not supposed to witness.
I would have been that girl
who would have been too afraid to leave the ditches,
to stop hearing the earth scream,
to notice the cannon is changing
direction to point next to the neighboring town,
another nation they call Ireland or Bosnia or Rwanda.
I would be the one screaming
at you now, a life of regret behind me,
insisting *They are coming*,
trying to save you from the things I have seen
if only so that I could finally begin to save
myself from my memories—
the children from the amputations,
the women from the lustful generals,
the bodies from the ditches,
all of them parts of the bloods running
through me now, whispering still with urgency.

Lisa Rying

Variations on the Circus

There is a smile
beneath the whiteface
of the crying clown
and a tear in the tiger's eye.

Tiger's eye earrings pinch
a grandmother's unpierced lobes
and shudder as she applauds the flamethrower,
tawny and smoldering.

Smoldering in the shadows
is a discarded cigarette.
Smoke swims up to the sleeping lion,
invading savannah dreams.

Dreams come true in our three-ring extravaganza,
cries the ringmaster.
An empty trapeze sways in the striped silk sky.

Sky-high air taut as the tightwire
and sweet with the breath of sugar-eyed children
hums around the balancers,
who know the congregation is hoping they will slip.

Slip out of the vaulted silk cocoon and sidle
toward the sideshow. Behold the wonders of the world,
gilded and grotesque beyond measure.

Measure the stride of silence
in the shame of elephant steps.
Approach the limit of loss
in polar bear eyes that have never seen snow.

Snowcone drips from the hand of a twelve-year-old girl,
staining her cloud-colored shorts with clusters of cherries.
She blushes and bunches a cardigan in her lap.

Lapping dusty water from a bowl,
the freakshow girl who was raised by wolves
catches her reflection in a pause.
She touches the water's lips.
There is a smile.

Katherine Thompson

Corinthians

Back when he'd been working in the hardware store, Crauford thought, people had asked him simple questions that he'd know the answers to.

They'd ask "How much for the nine millimeter wrench?" or "Where can I find the black spray paint?" or "Can I get change for a five?" and he'd say "Two ninety-five." "Aisle seven." "Yes."

Now people asked him questions that he couldn't answer, like "What is your red-blood cell count?" or "Do you believe in God?" or "Do you want orange juice with your scrambled eggs?" Questions like this had no answers. Or else, if they had them, he didn't care what they were. When he'd worked at the hardware store, there'd been a house to go home to, and April. Now, there was only the man who slept in the hospital bed beside him and muttered in his sleep. The night April died he had escaped into the night and walked around the store in circles, not going anywhere, just looking at the stars and letting his feet take him. Crauford straightened the clean white sheet over his legs and folded the top back in a perfect crease at his chest. He flipped TV channels and realized two things. First, it had been fifteen years since April had passed away. Second, Sarah had asked him, "Do you believe in God?" and he did care.

That was when it had begun. He certainly didn't care about the state of his mortal soul, but when she'd spoken, he noticed the smell of Altoid mints on her breath and it captivated him. In this hospital that neutralized and disinfected smells, the fresh mint-ness of the air around her startled him more than the question had.

The very first Sunday she tottered into his room, he'd been unprepared.

"I'm Sarah," she'd said, by way of introduction.

Then she pulled out a wide sheet of paper and read him her church's mission statement. She was here, she proclaimed, "to help those in need draw closer to our Lord, Jesus Christ."

Without a pause, she dragged a chair over by his bed, settled her plump body down beside him, assertive. "Do you believe in God?"

"I'm Crauford." He said, giving her a wry smile for her abruptness.

He liked the way she said her name—Sarah. She took his introduction as an invitation and flipped, capable and quick, to Corinthians. Sitting ramrod straight, she read "Love is patient, love is kind, love keeps no record of wrong." She over-emphasized the consonants, especially the "v"s of love and smacked her lips together every time she paused for a breath.

When she came to read him Bible verses on the following Sunday, she took his hand in prayer. He convinced himself that he felt a faint squeeze as her fingers covered his. Her hands smelled nice, like elderflower lotion. Her Bible had a scent too, like pumpkin pie. When he'd asked her why it smelled that way, she'd managed to look proud and sheepish at the same time.

"I keep it open on the kitchen counter by the stove" she admitted. "It's so I can read scripture while I'm cooking."

He smiled at her. "Thank you so much for coming back. It really means a lot to me."

"It's God's work, not mine." She shuffled her feet. Her orthopedic shoes clumped as she escaped down the hallway.

The next week, she'd read out of Ruth and had brought him an orange.

"I figured you might need something tangy here in this dull place." This time, as she read, her back relaxed beginning to curve to fit the angles of the chair.

"When Jesus came into Peter's house, he saw Peter's mother-in-law lying in bed with a fever. He touched her hand and the fever left her."

She snapped the book shut, startling him. His thoughts had been far from God. Forget Jesus and the laying on of hands! He wanted her hand's touch.

"The problem with our society" she declared, off-topic, "is what we teach our kids today. We cram violence and sex down their throats on TV. Both parents work. There's no one to teach them, to guide them. They're turning away from Jesus Christ—they should be learning salvation instead of sex."

He winced.

She peeled the orange and continued reading Ruth, still lost in thought.

She stopped suddenly, "My daughter's loyal like Ruth," she said "She's a good Christian daughter. She calls me on the weekends and comes to visit as often as she can."

"Never often enough, though, I'm sure" he replied.

She looked pleased that he understood.

"I was upset when Ruth married Boaz," he admitted. "She bowed at his feet. Plus, I wanted her to stay with Naomi." She smiled at him and rubbed the orange peel between her fingers. It left an acrid scent on her fingertips. She caught herself, straightened her posture, and turned back to Ruth.

He could understand love better than Paul, he thought. There was love in the way her beautiful neck lumped as she craned her head towards him, in the way her pink jumpsuit pouched

over her rounded stomach, in the way the skin around her knuckles crinkled into crows feet when she leafed through searching for Hosea. He even began reading the Bible again, searching for descriptions. He read through half of Proverbs and most of Ecclesiastes before he gave up and looked at the table of contents in the front. Sarah never would have had to do that. He flipped to page four-hundred sixty-nine and found himself entranced. "How beautiful you are, my darling! Oh, how beautiful! Your eyes behind your veil are doves," he read. This was it, although Sarah's eyes were more like a lake frozen over. He touched the pages with soft fingers. "Your hair is like a flock of goats descending from Mount Gilead. Your teeth are like a flock of sheep just shorn, coming up from the washing. Your lips are like a scarlet ribbon; your mouth is lovely." He felt his chest muscles tighten. If this was God, he could feel him speaking. The only thing Solomon had missed was the smell of elderflowers and mint.

It was Sunday now and he was waiting for her. Last Sunday had been a painful day. She hadn't come. The eggs had been runny. His sheet was perpetually wrinkled. On Tuesday, he began to truly panic. Perhaps she had noticed the way he had leaned in to catch her smell. Perhaps he was transparent. Perhaps she knew. He squirmed and buried his face deeper in the pillow. He began to torment himself. "What if she never came back?" The idea made his foot tremble, disturbing the crispness of the sheet. He straightened it again and glanced at the clock. She was ten minutes late, if she was coming at all.

Suddenly she was standing in his doorway. She looked bereft. "I'm sorry I wasn't here last week." He could see the tiredness in the pores of her face and reached out to touch her hand.

"There's been a—" she paused, "a family crisis." He gestured for her to sit down.

"I don't think I'm going to read today" she said, her loud voice muted down to a whisper.

"It's fine." He paused, trying to understand the look in her eyes. "Are you going to be okay?"

He could see her struggling. "My daughter told me that she—" she broke off and stared at him. It was silent.

"She had an abortion." She spit the words quickly as if to get the bad taste out of her mouth.

"Isn't it ironic?" Moisture gathered at the corners of her eyes. "Here I am with a 'Right to Life' bumper sticker on the back of my car and my daughter is out there killing—" Her face crumbled.

"No. I'm not reading today. I can't."

He looked at her for a moment, then took the Bible gently from her hands.

"May I read instead?"

She seemed about to protest, but he continued. He opened the Bible and began to read. "Until the day breaks and the shadows flee, I will go to the mountain of myrrh and to the hill of incense. All beautiful you are, my darling; there is no flaw in you." She looked up at him, astonished, then put rested her lambswool head in her hands and stared at her knees.

"How beautiful your sandaled feet, O prince's daughter" he continued. At that moment, her stiff posture melted away. He saw it and his voice cracked with nervousness. "Your graceful legs are like jewels, the work of a craftsman's hands. Your navel is a rounded goblet that never lacks blended wine. Your waist is a mound of wheat encircled by lilies."

She stood up in a flurry and walked quickly towards the door. But, before she reached it, she stopped, opened the closet and reached in to pull out a blanket.

Her eyes were still moist, but her voice was firm.

"Your voice sounded a little shaky. You might be getting a cold."

She arranged the blanket over his legs, careful to avoid wrinkles. Then, slowly and carefully, she took his hand in hers.

Natalie Phillips

Unresolved

it is beyond me
to understand
the inconsistent drumming of my heart

just when i think you no longer matter
i hear your voice
on an answering machine
and despite the perfunctory message
i once again feel a little out of control
the words do not matter
it is the familiar low, rough sound
that make my insides tingle

you do not try to meet me
it just happens
and you don't even know what you do
that is how i know
this is real

you are rugged and coarse
wild and mad
Your voice masks the force of a gathering ocean wave
You walk with an unseen purpose
sometimes I see flames in your eyes
Your passion is tangible
it pours from your skin, relentlessly
surrounding you, a tense circle of energy
but you are oblivious to your fire
as a dog is to his tail
it is too much a part of you.

i embrace your volatility
because from it stems
your inherent tenderness

you are a man
whose core i crave
but your actions
leave me unsure, unsettled

and i am one who is always sure,
always settled

when you come close
your breath sends a warm flooding to my eager lips,
do my flushed cheeks give away my hope of your entry?

and did i mention that you are in love with someone
who is not me
and i care immensely
and i do not care,
i do not care at all
when you slip into my bed

Uttama Sharma

---

the gravestone

snow
(falls
and covers
the frostbitten grass

like a white sheet

sheltering everything
against the sunlight as it
dies)
lightly

(through the trees—
like a pastor's benediction
in light

radiating as it is compel
ling

the fall of
white forgetfulness

accumulating

on
the
gravest
one.

Daniel Eiras

Inertia is not like God

On the last night
it's murder
to get you out the door:
your hair is stupid,
your dress is obvious,
the party will be a horror.
When I agree, you join me.
We actually get in a line for drinks.
You told me so.
I say look at them,
look at them,
lined up like animals at the circus.
More like the pound, you say.
From behind your wineglass,
I feel the gravity in your smile.
We need distractions and diversions.
We've been to five movies I'll never remember.
You are superstitious.
You are afraid of people,
but not love.
I want to say anything right to you.
You say people make promises
about lasting to the end of this earth,
but they all believe in a future
of interplanetary travel.
You are full of contradictions
and wisdom
and I worry for you.
I need to disappear.
Later I find you,
upstairs,
on a bed full of coats.
I have not introduced you as my sister.
I have not introduced you at all.
You are awkward,
you are almost an embarrassment
You gesture at the television with an empty glass,
you say decadence means everything falls apart.
"They said that and I love it."
You love it but you don't know what it means.
I see the road home
wind off differently
than it had before.

I could see the end
large, and old,
like other people's fathers.
You come into my room
full of words
and then quickly tired.
You are drugged,
looking like you can't feel the pull of the earth.
Your sadness is the song I can't forget.
I go to the window
for the light
and instead, see the lawn.
The noise we joked about at five a.m.
had been the hired men, mowing,
forcing the edges of the neat grass
farther into the trees.
It must have been five,
my memory is right.
You speak then.
And there is a brief feathery silence
that grows long.

Amy Vyas

Rain

Tonight I am wearing a dress and sheer black nylons, the kind my ex used to like to peel off, wet and sticking to my willing legs. I met my ex at a bar. It was the night before my first med school class, it was raining, and I was having a drink. His pick-up line as he touched my chair: "Do you always wear wet stockings?" The next morning, when Sean's blue eyes and biceps teased me from the front of the classroom, I was grateful to fate, or whatever it was that threw us together.

I am of a different opinion now.

Fate can go fuck itself.

As raindrops knock on the windows like specters uneasy in tombs, I finger my drink. A man old enough to be interested in my mother puts his forearms, crossed, on the counter. "Whiskey sour, please," he says to the bartender. He takes a clear straw from a rack and chews its end.

While he waits he looks at my hands, then my wrists, which are encircled by silver chains. His breath reminds me of my mother's mint garden, and I realize that his night is still sober and clear. His hair is the kind Sean might have if he ever reaches his forties: curly mud-brown frosted by white wisps, untidy and graceful against the back of his neck.

When he receives his glass he raises his head. His cheekbones leap out, like sculptures of angels arrested in flight. My eyes pull his gaze toward me. He has irises the color of clouds. They are sadder than the rain.

He puts his glass to his mouth then lets it escape the pressure of his spare lips. "Hi, I'm Jon. I've got AIDS. Care to talk?"

That is supposed to be *my* pick-up line.

* * *

Over his second drink Jon wonders why I fell in love with Sean, why I allowed myself to take his sex and give him mine. To a certain extent I am mystified, but I know this: you are capable of seeing things that are not there, and you lie to yourself to make the story as fairy tale as possible.

I try to explain. That his accent fascinated me. That his medical degree, his tennis arm, his comments about my skirt lengths and lips, it all drew me in, like the forbidden treasure so gaudy and sleek that you have to touch it, even if it means certain death. That one lonely night I came dripping to his apartment, and on his rain-soaked couch I lost my virginity.

But Sean knew. He knew it was wrong.

When I was diagnosed HIV-positive a year ago I went to his apartment bent on killing him. Except that when I came in he started crying and I couldn't hate him anymore, even if he was weeping not from guilt but self-pity. So I left him still sobbing, smothering his tears in a towel, his form slumped over his kitchen table. I would never see him again.

"I am stupid, for falling in love. Because you risk so much. It means you open holes in the softest parts of you."

Jon takes my wet grip. "Love is never stupid. Never."

He looks away. "Just unlucky sometimes."

* * *

The glow two doomed-to-die people see in each other. Loneliness. Desire. Whatever it is, we know we must go home together, pull off our wet clothes, and make love to each other.

When it is over, I turn and trace his sweaty nose with my thumbs. His eyelashes lift at my touch.

"Let's die together," I whisper.

* * *

"Did I hurt you?"

"No, of course not."

"I love your hips," he says, his hands curving up my thighs.
I laugh. "Why?"
"They're like marble statues. Only softer."
And our rhythm of passion begins again.

* * *

"Why are you crying?"
"I thought I would be alone until I died. I never thought I'd find anyone, ever."
His sadness mingles with my hair. Together we breathe, listening to the rain.

* * *

I am exhausted, but something else needs to be asked, and answered, before we finally go to sleep.

"Who infected you?"

"A one night stand. I was at a party and was a little drunk, and I took her home with me."

"Why?" But I know why. Surrounded by the dark I remember what solitude is, how it can make your heart hot and achy, even for the wrong person. "When?"

"Fifteen years ago."

Long after Jon has fallen asleep I turn the number over and over in my head. Fifteen years, my thoughts shout so loud not even the storm can drown it out. I put my head on his chest and imagine it colder, stiffer than anything alive can be. It keeps me up until daylight pushes between the curtain cracks, pulling me out of bed and into the kitchen.

* * *

"A tomato sandwich for breakfast?" Jon, freshly risen from the bedclothes, smiles at me from the doorway.

I don't smile back. "They're good for you. They cured my dad's warts."

His mouth twists down as he comes and puts his arms around my neck. "It doesn't cure AIDS by any chance, does it?"

I pull away. Because his heart is too close to mine.

"Mary?" Jon's breath hurts my ears.

"I can't. I don't want to."

He says something else but my thoughts are too loud, my tears come too fast.

I can't. No more holes.

I pull him, push him, lock him out. But his knocking won't go away.

I take my plate and hurl its contents out the door.

"I love you," he says, his eyes full of rain.

This, after I have fucked him, thrown him out and assaulted him with a tomato sandwich.

I am crying and fall down the steps into his thin arms. It hurts to press hard against him but I swallow his lips and tongue whole. We are plastered together, trying to heal each other's heart.

* * *

I let him come back inside. He cooks scrambled eggs and I make myself another tomato sandwich. Jon offers to feed me some eggs. "A cure for the human condition," he says. I laugh because his fork tickles. And our food is forgotten, quickly.

As we return to the comfort of enshrouding sheets, I know that someday all I may have left of him are the memories of his taste, how his love touched my cheek. We will hold hands during checkups, and we will comfort each other in hospital rooms. And one day I will watch his casket being lowered into the earth, somewhere forever damp from the tears of the living.

I foresee all of this. But I will be stronger than loss.

* * *

It is a sunny day. We dress and walk outside where we find a patch of grass so sweet it is hard to believe that anything can perish. We lie down, closer to the earth than we will ever be until we die.

"Jon, do you believe in unicorns?"

He touches my chin, smiling. "They're a lovely idea. Do you?"

"I'd like to believe in them. Did you know that unicorns can't regret? And only virgins can touch them. After I first had sex with Sean, I wasn't sure if it was worth losing the ability. And I was so sad. Because what if unicorns are real."

"Am I worth it?"

"Yes. But I'm still sad."

I know he understands because he wraps himself towel fashion around my damp body. I was three when someone last held me like that, with my breath seeping into the other's pores. My mother in a rare moment of closeness cradled my newly bathed body and squeezed me, delighting in the softness of a child's form.

But it was not like this, a man and a woman fitting so naturally together that it sends songs up and down the lengths of our limbs.

After our kiss he lies back to view the cloudless sky. I watch his lips part slowly, like two weeping lovers.

"Hail Mary, full of grace," he says.

Jennifer Oh

In the space of time

for Nancy Jane

I can't tell you what you do in terms of time.

I feel everything I might ever feel
in and out of the clouds
someplace with no people but for us
just a phone connection to reality.

I miss the window to you and see
I'm always nervous as a bird
  falling out of the sky
and thinking so deeply of you when you move
(you're going on a trip tomorrow)
I wonder how normal the world may look to other people
Other people.

When you move I'm aware the earth does,
hurling through space.

I can't tell, but when I burned my hand last night
I thought in a flash She is thirsty

Silly But still—would we know?

I ran water over the wound my hand
though hurt extended the cup toward you

And in a flash no more burn

You on the phone saying
I'm in the kitchen Why?

I couldn't answer with the sound of you drinking
as pretty as you are.

Carole De Souza

homeward, bound

casting the Changes—
hand and three bronze coins:
Thunder and lightning:
the image of biting through.

I

Day sliding into scabbard of dusk.

Scent of rain on hot pavement:
wet steam rising like sex
for miles.

An unforgiving country tasting
through open windows
of steel and clay. The hills peeled
back from this healing asphalt gash
undulating—stormsick green, preternatural:
spinning out at high speed: spokes
from the wheel body passing.

A tarnished sky lipping out heavy-lidded,
solidly: sealing the distance,
the heavy air,
the light
in.

interlude:
you have given us
the space of two words
in which to construct
a habitat. i protest
this act of enclosure.

unfolding beneath
your eggshell skull
the hard mad knot of tumor
lurks, swells: solid
on a resonant image
like nothing else of you
is solid. i am coming
back to you both.

II

The highway is a starfish.
Cut off one arm
and it will give it to you.
Another will grow back
to replace it.

The arm of the highway stretches, akimbo
through the plane of the bruised sun:
any two lines might make this.

meta
your face flushed under the halogen bulb,
the unconscious foot tapping
and a pencil stroking. this
is how i choose you. domestic, quotidian.

or, waking to your six feet
of warm bones, the blankness of your sleep,
the irrational rising fear. my cheek
cradled in the curve of your clavicle.

with twenty white coats, we are drugging the life in you,
the thalidomide baby your brain keeps sprouting:
limbs everywhere and grasping hands
pulling histories up by their roots.

III

My blood moves with the unbalanced gallop
of the wheels. In the empty seat
my wracked dreaming shifts greenly,
uneasily: your body shifts
the axis of my body.

My feet are certain of the journey.
Heavy, automatic, lead-limbed. I am counting
the miles with Zeno's numbers
and dividing by fast food signs
to reach something rational.

interlude:
we will not be saved by numbers.
after the numbers of our fingers, our toes,
they bleed out:
they stand outlined against the sun
letting the light through,
translucent:
letting the blue veins show through.

IV

Malignant starfish: migratory, quick-fingered.
From this point—passing
this point—anywhere is possible.

The raspy board-bare walls of the shotgun shanties
are possible: the stark ribs
sleeping doggedly in the yard, the grim eyes
of the stopaction children—burnt holes
in a wet blanket.

The sea is possible: sawgrass
and sand, bent hobble of skittering pipers,
crabwise retreat of frothy tides—
neap and spring.

(This pull is like that:
unwavering, ineluctable.
Gravitational, attractive:
a constant free falling.)

stasis
blue for calm.
white for sterility.
red for anger.

red for the angry parasitic
heart of your head
clawing outward as though
from a womb. the pale white
matter clinging brokenly to its rising form:

limp severed tendons
of an amputated appendage
draped like algae from the monster of myth.

for god's sake stay
put. i'm coming.

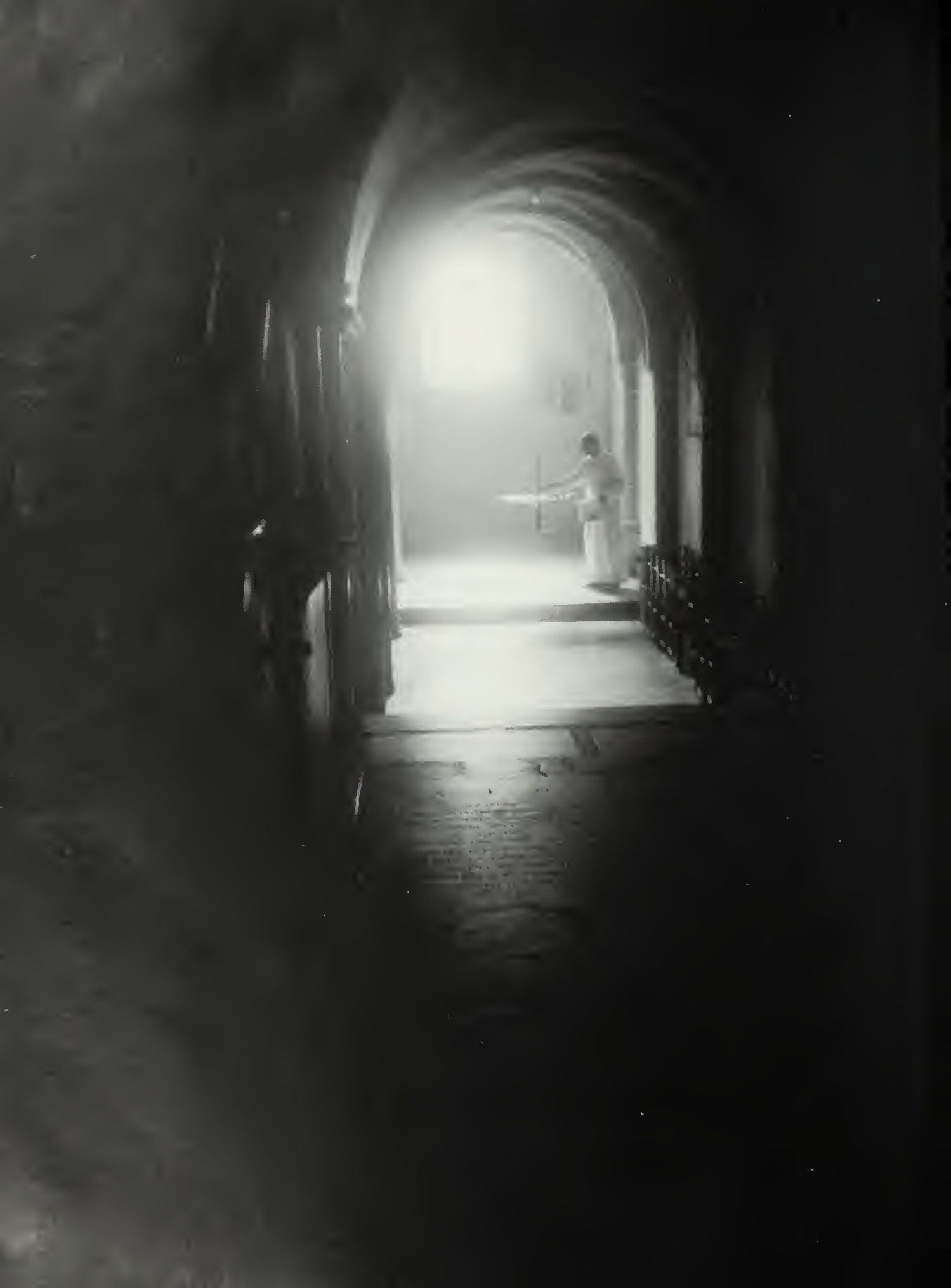
V

By now I am so near
the city lights of your staccato nights
that you should
be visible from here, should hover
on the horizon like Vega:
irradiant remote,
body pressed hard against the horizon
to hold the hungry healing in.

I am shearing the taut miles away
to get back to your ouroboric eyes
and the sharpening blades
of your shoulders. In the distance
heat lightning stutters groundless,
all knotted spine and no rain.

Know this: I talk to myself because your voice
is the color of burnt timbers,
moves over me like sackcloth.
Because the crab is working into you
sideways, slipwise,
hard-shelled and soft bellied in your brain.
Because you are eating away
at us both. The least brutal man
I have ever known: you
are consuming yourself
and my silences—
pared down and softly,
strangely suicidal.

Alexis Blane



627 R2 P 835
10/03/01 33357 SELF

Duke University Libraries
D02600690N

Duke University Libraries
D02600690N